

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ3 Copyright No.

Shelf. G168 L

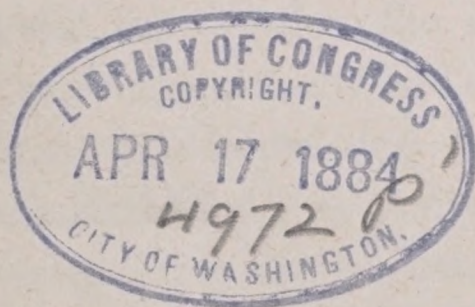
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

APR 17 1884

LIGHT AHEAD.

BY

CECELIA A. GARDINER.



NEW YORK:
PHILLIPS & HUNT.

CINCINNATI:
WALDEN & STOWE.

1884.

PZ3

.G168L

Copyright, 1884, by
PHILLIPS & HUNT,
New York.

LIGHT AHEAD.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a bright morning in May—merry, bonnie May—when a little girl, whose head was lightly crowned with the scarcely perceptible weight of ten joyous, happy summers, came bounding down the massive stone steps of a stately mansion on Fifth Avenue, and, with a quick, elastic step, pursued her way to one of the many fashionable seminaries, where the denizens of the metropolis of the Empire State are promised for their daughters mental and moral training of the highest character. The parents of Maud Morrison, the little girl of whom we write, were very careful in regard to the religious instruction of their beloved child, and had selected her present school from their knowledge of the principal as a lady of undoubted Christian character.

As Maud walked rapidly on, her head and heart, as was natural enough, were full of the approaching mid-summer holidays, and already across her mental eye-sight came visions of the green fields and fresh breezes of Grandma Rodman's farm, where every summer she spent so many bright and happy weeks.

O, what fun she would have! Her little cousins, Nellie and Fannie Ormsby, from Boston, would be there; and then there would be Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary. O, it would be jolly, for Uncle Fred was so merry and generous, and Aunt Mary so sweet and gentle; and she would be so glad to see them all.

But there was another event close at hand, which occupied Maud's thought this morning. Mamma's birthday would occur on the next week, and she was puzzling her little brain in trying to prepare a surprise for her, in the shape of a present, which she would consider worthy the acceptance of one whom she so dearly loved.

"O!" she thought, "I wish I had made something for her; but I haven't had time. I have so many lessons, and I have to practice so much."

Maud forgot, as so many older people are apt to do, the little minutes spent in idleness, sixty of which make a whole hour, in which her deft little fingers might have fashioned some pretty useful gift, which would have been highly prized as a memento of a daughter's affection and industry.

"Well, I can't help it," she thought; "it's too late now. I wish I could get that lovely blue tie that I priced at Stewart's the other day. It was three dollars, but it had such beautiful lace on it, and mamma looks so sweet in blue. I wish I had the money of my own. I'll have to ask papa for it. He gave me two dollars yesterday, and I've spent, let me

see, twenty-five, thirty-five, forty ; I declare, I've spent fifty cents !”

Although Maud's knowledge of arithmetic was somewhat limited, she saw at a glance that she was in possession of but half the required amount, and with a rueful face she thought, “ Well, I'll have to ask papa for it. He'll tease me, I know, and call me a little swindler, as he always does, telling me I swindle him out of his money by hugs and kisses and false pretenses of affection. He's a dear good papa, and he'll give it to me, I know.”

Having settled this matter to her satisfaction, she tripped lightly on, and arrived at school just as the bell was calling the scholars together for the opening exercises of the morning. Fully occupied with her teacher and studies, the day passed quickly and pleasantly. We must not blame Maud too severely if we know that her thoughts paid flying visits to the blue neck-tie, and then went dancing off to the green fields of her grandmother's farm, of which we have spoken. It required all the determination of which the busy little brain was possessed to chain her attention down to those tiresome lessons which, it seemed to her, had never been so tiresome before.

At last the hour for dismissal came, when Mrs. Oakley, the principal of the seminary, called the school together and said :

“ Young ladies, I am about to make a somewhat novel proposition to you. You know there are times

in which very many who have been in good circumstances are reduced to poverty and sometimes even to the verge of starvation. Yesterday a case was brought to my notice which I consider eminently deserving. I think it only right that those of us, as is the case, I believe, with all of you, to whom God has given the good things of this life, should contribute of their abundance to supply the wants of those to whom he has seen fit to deny them. We are placed here, my dear girls, as you all know, not to gratify our own selfish desires, not only to prepare our souls for a higher life in the bright world to which we look forward, but to minister to the necessities of those around us, to alleviate pain and suffering and want. We can do this, not always by the bestowal of money, or food—for a smile, a kind look, or a gentle word of encouragement is often more precious to the heart of the sad and weary than the supply of actual want.

“The family of whom I speak are Americans, of good birth and education, reduced to poverty by unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. The father was a merchant in this city, but, owing to the insolvency of several firms in other cities, who were largely his debtors, he failed utterly and entirely, saving nothing from the wreck, but paying his creditors twenty-five cents on the dollar.

“The strain upon him has been too great, and the consequence is that his nervous system has yielded to the shock, and he is now entirely broken in health and

spirits. He is prostrated upon a bed from which I think it extremely doubtful if he ever rises. I believe his work in this world is ended, and unless something can be done for the relief of his helpless family, I fear much suffering and privation are in store for them. His wife is a delicate, refined lady, in feeble health, and unable to do much toward the support of the family."

"Have they any children, Mrs. Oakley?" asked Louise Wentworth, in a tone of much interest.

"Yes, my dear, and it is for them particularly that I wish to interest you. They have a daughter, about seventeen, who is a fine pianist, and would be very grateful if she could procure some pupils. She is fully qualified to teach, having been instructed by the very best professors, and has also the additional advantage of a genuine love for music."

"Are there any little girls?" asked Maud, who was becoming interested, in spite of the blue neck-tie and the green fields.

"Yes, there is a younger daughter, somewhere near your own age, my dear, a bright, lady-like little girl, and, I believe, one or two boys younger. I have stated these facts to you, thinking that those of you who feel interested in them might place the matter before your parents, and give them such assistance as they may think proper. I shall be pleased to act as almoner for any of you who may wish to aid them; but as they are extremely sensitive, I think, perhaps,

it would be better for you not to visit them at present.

“There is one thing, my dear girls, which we can all do. We can each present their case before the throne of Him who is ever ready to listen to the cries of his people. Suppose before we enter upon our charitable work we kneel here together and supplicate for them the assistance of our great Helper, without whom we can do nothing. Thus we shall initiate our good work with his blessing.”

In the midst of a circle of kneeling figures, with bared heads and reverent faces, Mrs. Oakley offered a simple prayer for the afflicted family, after which she said,

“Perhaps the young ladies would like to know the name of the family for whom we have been asking these blessings. It is Hamilton, which is, as you know, a highly respectable and quite an aristocratic one. I am going there this afternoon, and to-morrow I shall be able to report more fully. In the meantime do not forget to remember them in your prayers to-night. I shall be very happy to assist you in any schemes which you may devise. Good-bye, my dear girls. May God bless and keep you all!”

After the dismissal of the school our warm-hearted little friend, Maud, who had forgotten for the present all her own projects, went to Mrs. Oakley, and asked permission to accompany her on her errand of mercy.

“My dear little girl,” was the ready reply, “I am very glad you feel disposed to go, and will take you with pleasure, if you are quite sure your parents would approve of your doing so.”

“O, yes, Mrs. Oakley, my mamma is always ready to help the poor, and teaches me to do so, too; and if you will allow me, I should so much like to go and see that little girl. Then I can tell mamma all about her, and I know she will go, too.”

“Well, darling, as our way lies past your house, suppose, while I am getting ready, you run on and ask mamma’s permission, and I will meet you at your own door. Then we shall both feel safer and happier than if you went without.”

So, donning her pretty sack and hat, she was soon tripping homeward to ask the desired permission. Having obtained it, she stationed herself on the steps, watching eagerly for Mrs. Oakley’s appearance. Her patience was not put to a very severe test, and, walking demurely by her teacher’s side, her active imagination had ample opportunity for exercise. The walk was not very long, and they soon reached the abode of poverty and sorrow. Such scenes were not new to Maud, for she had often accompanied her parents to similar ones; but she had never in any such expedition met any one who seemed so much on an equality with herself—or, as Mrs. Oakley had said, a real little lady. All whom she had previously seen had been the children of the

Irish or German poor; but now, when she saw one who was as good-looking and as well behaved as herself, her tender little heart was touched. Maud had all the keen sensibilities and quick, genuine sympathy of real refinement, and to-day she treated this child of adversity with as much politeness and consideration as though she had been a little duchess. The two children were soon chatting together quite confidentially, and, on taking leave, Maud said,

“Now, Alice, you will come to see me, won’t you?”

Alice hesitated a moment, and then answered in a slightly embarrassed tone,

“I would like to go very much. But you know, Maud, your mamma might not like to have me go to see you. I am not rich now as you are,” she added, as her lip quivered and her voice trembled.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Maud, indignantly. “My mamma is not so silly; she likes me to associate with little ladies, whether they are rich or poor. You needn’t be afraid she will ever refuse to allow you to come to see me. It is only coarse, rude little girls that she forbids me to play with. She always tells me to remember that fine clothes never make ladies and gentlemen, but that true politeness springs from the heart.”

“I think your mamma must be real nice,” said Alice, in a meditative tone.

“She is real nice,” answered Maud. “O, Alice,

you would love her ever so much. She is not one bit proud, and she is so gentle and kind. Now you will come, wont you?"

Alice colored a little as she said,

"Well, to tell you the truth, Maud, I haven't any very nice clothes to wear, and I don't like to go in my old ones."

"Never mind, that doesn't make any difference. Why, Alice, there are two little girls who live in a big brown-stone house very near us, and every thing about it is elegant, and they have splendid carriages and horses, and they dress beautifully, but mamma will not let me play with them at all, because she says they are rude and selfish."

Alice made a promise that she would go if her mother would allow her to do so, and Maud bade her an affectionate farewell.

As soon as she reached home she related to her mother all the particulars of her visit to the Hamilton family, and obtained her promise that she would herself visit them, and do all in her power for their assistance.

"O, mamma!" exclaimed Maud, in breathless eagerness, "I asked Alice to come and see me. You will let her come, wont you? She said perhaps you would not allow her to come because she is poor, but I told her my mamma was not so silly. Say you will let her come, mamma, please."

"I cannot promise you that, my dear child, until I

have seen her," replied Mrs. Morrison. "Her poverty will make no difference, and if I find her all that you represent her to be, I will invite her myself."

"Thank you, dear mamma. How good you are!" exclaimed the excited child. "O here comes papa. I must go and tell him all about it."

Away she ran, and jumped into her father's arms, as he opened the street door, almost smothering him with kisses.

"O, papa! come right in here and sit down. I want to tell you something."

"What is it, Pussy? Want some money to buy candy and gimcracks, I'll be bound."

"Now, papa, do you think I only hug and kiss you because I want candy and gimcracks, as you call them?"

"Why they are what most little girls want, aren't they, Pussy?"

"Yes, but they are not what I want now. I want something a great deal better. O, papa! you don't know what I've seen this afternoon."

He threw up his hands in pretended terror, and exclaimed,

"What, in the name of Jupiter, was it? A kangaroo, or an alligator, or a wild-cat? Your eyes look as though you had seen all three."

"O no, papa, I haven't seen any of these horrid things; but I have seen a little girl no older than I

am—a real little lady—but she is awfully poor, and I want to help her.”

“But, my daughter, how did you come across this little girl? Did mamma go with you? I hope you have not been visiting these places without her knowledge and consent?”

“No, papa. Mrs. Oakley told us about her in school to-day, and I asked mamma if I might go with her.”

“Go with whom, Pussy? Your answers are as clear as mud.”

“With Mrs. Oakley,” answered Maud, laughing. “O, papa, her father—Alice’s father, I mean,” she added, correcting herself, “was a merchant, and Mrs. Oakley says he failed in business. What does that mean, papa?”

“Why, daughter, when a man is largely in debt, and cannot pay what he owes, he is said to fail, because he does not meet his promises. Perhaps he gets goods on credit; that is, he does not pay the money for them, but gives a note or a promise to pay in three or six months. Sometimes he sells goods to other merchants in distant cities or in country places on the same terms; that is, they promise to pay him at a certain time. Now, don’t you see, that if these merchants do not pay him, he, in his turn, cannot pay for his goods, and so, if he is an honorable man, he gives up all he has to pay his creditors, or the men to whom he owes the money. That is what people

mean when they say a man has failed. But don't puzzle your little head over these things."

"Then that is what makes Alice's father poor now, isn't it, papa?"

"I suppose so, pet; but run now and get me my dressing-gown and slippers."

Away she bounded, as light-hearted as any bird, and presently returned with the desired articles. Her nimble fingers soon helped him to divest himself of his heavy coat, and arrayed him in a luxurious dressing-gown of drab merino, faced down the front, with sleeves turned up with blue silk, quilted most daintily, while a heavy cord and tassels of the same blue tint encircled his waist. Slippers of the same colors, exquisitely embroidered, incased his feet, showing that loving feminine hands ministered to his comfort. After seeing him comfortably seated in his easy-chair, Maud hopped into his lap, with her mind and heart full of her schemes.

"Where is mamma, Lady-bird?"

"She is coming down in one minute, but before she comes I want to tell you a secret. You musn't tell mamma, will you?"

"A secret from mamma, Pussy! I don't quite relish the idea of my little girl having secrets from her parents."

"O, but this isn't any harm, papa. You know it is almost mamma's birthday, and I want to make her a present."

“O, ho!” laughed the indulgent father. “I see how it is; you want some money.”

“That’s it!” she exclaimed, gleefully, clapping her hands and laughing merrily.

“Why, why, what an extravagant little puss it is! I gave you some money yesterday. A regular little swindler, trying to gouge her old father out of all his money.”

“There now; I knew you’d call me a little swindler. But here comes mamma. Give me the money, please, quick!”

She was too late, for, while she was speaking, Mrs. Morrison entered the room.

“Mamma!” exclaimed Maud, “I’ve been telling papa about Alice, and he is going to let me help her, I know.”

“I don’t know about that. I think we must take mamma into our counsels. I want her sentence before I put my head in the fire. Do you know anything about this case, my dear?” he asked, turning to his wife, who had seated herself by his side.

“Nothing more than Maud has told me; but I thought I would go and see them to-morrow, and ascertain all about it.”

“I would do so, and if we find that Maud’s generous little heart and enthusiastic spirit have not run away with her, but that the case is really as she represents it, we must do something for their relief. Maud, my dear child, do not think that I wish to

check this spirit in you ; on the contrary, I hope you will always remember that God intrusts to us the means which we have in our hands, and if we refuse to assist the worthy poor, we are guilty of a great sin against him."

"Yes, papa ; but most of those poor people whom I have been with mamma to see were ignorant and dirty and disgusting, but these are so different. Alice has a sister, a young lady, and Mrs. Oakley says she would like to get some music scholars. I wish you would let me take lessons of her instead of that old German—he is so cross."

"Take care, Maud," said Mrs. Morrison. Do not speak disrespectfully of your teachers. Professor Gottfried is a most excellent musician, as well as a thorough instructor, and we know nothing of Miss Hamilton's capabilities."

"Well, mamma, but Miss Hamilton needs the money so much, and Professor Gottfried has plenty of scholars."

This was a powerful argument, and was not without its weight in the minds of people so charitably disposed as were Mr. and Mrs. Morrison.

The next day Mrs. Morrison called to see the family in whom Maud was so much interested, and became fully convinced that it was a case which required immediate attention, and also that whatever aid was rendered must be offered in an extremely delicate manner. Her own innate refinement and

truly Christian character made her eminently fitted for a work where so much skill and tact were required. She never despised or thought lightly of the poor and suffering, because she was a true follower of Him who, when on earth, had not where to lay his head, and for his sake she tried to alleviate the condition of all who were tried in like manner.

2





CHAPTER II.

Alice HAMILTON, the little girl who had so much enlisted Maud's sympathy, was a beautiful child of about the same age as Maud. Her large, dark eyes shone with a thoughtful light not often seen in one so young, but, child though she was, she had known much sorrow, which had left its imprint on her intelligent countenance. As she sits by the bedside of her sick father, reading to him that word of life which is so precious to him now in the hour of his necessity, the sweet face seems almost too pure for earth. Now, as the clear childish voice rings out those words which have been so comforting to the Christian in every age, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," a smile lights up the countenance of the sufferer as he murmurs,

"No, no; I am not afraid. 'He doeth all things well.'"

Then the heavy eyes closed in slumber, and Alice cautiously tiptoed her way into the next room, where her mother sat sewing.

"Mamma, where is Mabel?"

"She has gone out, dear, to make another effort to procure some pupils. Poor girl! she has been very

unsuccessful thus far, but we must keep on hoping and praying, Alice dear. Here comes Mabel now."

As the daughter entered the room with a weary, dispirited air, the mother asked, tenderly,

"Well, daughter, what success?"

"None, mother. I am sorry to say that I have spent my time and strength for naught. I went to Mrs. Mayhew's, but she said that her daughters were progressing fairly under their German teacher, and she was unwilling to make any change, at present, at least."

"Did you go to Mrs. Murray's?"

"Yes," she replied, thoughtfully, "but received nearly the same answer. I find that most parents are unwilling to employ a lady. They, very naturally, I think, prefer German professors."

"You are tired now," said her mother, soothingly; "when you have rested an hour things will look brighter."

"I am not in the least tired, thank you, mamma, only a wee bit disappointed. Not discouraged," she added, rallying quickly. "I mean to try again to-morrow. If I can't do one thing, I can do another. Thanks to your kindness, I have been taught to sew neatly; perhaps I may get a position in a store, or as a seamstress in some family."

"Never mind, Mabel," said Mrs. Hamilton, gently; "you know the psalmist said, 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'"

“O, mamma!” exclaimed Alice, joyfully, “do you remember that beautiful hymn that I learned in Sunday-school?”

“Yes, dear; repeat it, that we may keep its hopeful words in our hearts.”

Alice’s voice trembled a little at first, but, gaining confidence as she proceeded, she repeated the words which have imparted courage to many a doubting heart:

“Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite,
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
The promise assures us, ‘The Lord will provide.’”

“The birds, without barn or store-house, are fed:
From them let us learn to trust for our bread:
His saints what is fitting shall ne’er be denied,
So long as ’tis written, ‘The Lord will provide.’”

“Now, mamma, I am sure ‘the Lord will provide.’”

Alice had been carefully trained in the things which belong to God, and the seed which had been sown in the good ground of that young heart was already springing up, and promised to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.

Scarcely had the voice of the little comforter died away when a knock at the door announced the arrival of a visitor. Alice arose, and opening the door, admitted Mrs. Morrison, whose bright face and cheery air soon produced their effect upon the occupants of that plain little room. After inquiring kindly about the invalid, Mrs. Morrison said,

“Miss Mabel, are you at leisure this afternoon? If so, I should be glad of your company for a little while. Maud is extremely anxious to become a pupil of yours, and if you will favor us by taking charge of her musical education, we shall be very glad. Then Maud has some little friends who would also like to take lessons; so, if you have no objections, I should like to introduce you to your new pupils, and you can commence your instructions whenever you please.”

Poor Mabel could scarcely restrain the tears, but she choked them back with an effort, and grasping the hand of her friend, she exclaimed,

“Thank you a thousand times, dear Mrs. Morrison! how kind you are.”

Mabel was soon ready to accompany Mrs. Morrison, who, with the most delicate kindness, introduced her to several of her own friends, whom she had induced to place their daughters under her care. Before she returned home she had some half a dozen names enrolled on her list, with full permission to commence her work at once.

Entering the room with a swelling heart and a beaming face, she exclaimed,

“O, mamma, just think! I have six scholars to begin with, and a promise of some others when they finish their quarter with their present teachers.”

And then the sensitive, conscientious girl added,

“O, I hope I am not taking them from any one who needs them as much as I do.”

"There, Mabel," said Alice, with a sweet, trustful smile, "didn't I tell you the Lord would provide?"

"Yes, little sister, and so he has; and I am so thankful."

"My dear children," said Mrs. Hamilton, "I think we ought to thank him for his great goodness to us."

With grateful hearts they all knelt beside the sick husband and father, while this pious mother poured out her thank-offering to Him who had heard the cry of the needy.

O blessed power of prayer to the tried and almost despairing soul! O the sweetness of casting all its care on One who has not only the inclination but the ability to relieve the necessities of the importunate pleader! Where can we go when thick clouds surround us, when our way seems hedged up at every turn, but to Him to whom all things are clear and bright, "to whom the night shineth as the day?"

Owing to Mrs. Morrison's kind and timely assistance and her own skill and proficiency as a performer and instructress, Mabel secured a good class of pupils. By this means she was soon enabled to add much to the comfort of the family, and occasionally to provide some delicacy for the precarious appetite of the invalid. Many a tempting dish, prepared by Mrs. Morrison's experienced cook, found its way to the bedside of the sufferer, while nourishing cordials were provided by her own thoughtful care.

Maud's kind heart and busy brain were not so

much occupied with her new friend as to cause her to forget the blue neck-tie and the pleasant entertainment which her mother proposed to give to a few of her intimate friends. Maud had obtained permission to invite a small number of her playmates, and was anticipating a joyous time. With the utter abandon of a free childish heart, which has experienced no shadow of care or disappointment, she gave herself up to the sweet delights of bright dreams of the future. To her life was enveloped in rosy clouds, whose golden edges beckoned her on to a bright, smiling existence.

Her indulgent father always supplied her with the means of gratifying her innocent desires, and to-day the coveted article was in her possession. Try as she might, its lovely hue and filmy lace would come between her and her book, and thoughts of what mamma would say, and how sweet she would look in it, would mix themselves up with arithmetic and grammar. On her way from school an idea which had been in her mind for some days occupied her thoughts, and she reached her home with a face and manner which betokened important business.

Mrs. Morrison noticed the expression, but said nothing, knowing herself to be the recipient of all her daughter's plans as well as her pleasures. She knew full well that out of the abundance of a heart filled to overflowing, the gushing words would soon flow forth. After laying aside her hat, Maud seated

herself by an open window, apparently engrossed in watching the passers-by. Presently she turned her bright face, all aglow with pleasant thoughts, toward her mother, saying,

“Mamma, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“Ah,” was the smiling reply, “that is nothing very new or strange, is it, Maud?”

“No, mamma, not very; but I want to invite Alice here next Wednesday. May I, mamma?”

Mrs. Morrison hesitated a moment, when Maud interrupted eagerly, “I know what you are going to say, mamma, but I have thought it all over beforehand. You think Alice hasn’t any nice dress to wear, but please, mamma, give her one of my new white ones. We are just the same size, and she can wear it nicely. You know I have plenty, and you always tell me that I ought to divide my good things with those who have none.”

“Yes, daughter, I have no objection to your doing that. I am glad to see a generous spirit in my little girl. But, Maudie, I have been thinking whether it would be quite pleasant for Alice. You know you have already invited some of your school-mates who have heard from Mrs. Oakley all the circumstances of the case. Are you quite sure there is no one who would treat her rudely on account of her poverty? I should be very sorry to invite her here and have her meet any one who would be inconsiderate of her feelings.”

Maud assumed a thoughtful air for a moment, and then answered: "I cannot think of any one who would do such a thing, unless it might be Lou Wentworth, and she seemed so much interested when Mrs. Oakley was telling us about Alice that I don't think she would be rude."

Here the voice of Harry, Maud's little brother, broke in, saying, "O 'es, mamma, 'et her tum. Se so pitty."

Mrs. Morrison caught the little pleader in her arms, and, covering his smiling face with kisses, answered, "Well, Harry, you have conquered. Maud shall invite her, and if she comes we'll try and make it pleasant for her; wont we, darling?"

"'Es, I'll div her my dum to pay wiz."

"O Harry!" laughed Maud. "The idea of a girl wanting to play with a drum!"

"I should like to have Mabel come, too," said Mrs. Morrison, thoughtfully, "but she is so sensitive I fear she could not be induced to accept an invitation."

Maud was soon on her way, with a gleeful heart, to the house of her little friend. With the instinctive delicacy which she possessed in a remarkable degree for one so young, she made known her wishes. The invitation was easily enough given, but the subject of the dress was a matter of much greater difficulty. After setting forth in glowing colors the pleasure to which she looked forward, and her earnest wish that Alice should share it with her, she protested that she

should lose half her enjoyment if Alice were not there. Turning to Mrs. Hamilton, she said, in pleading tones,

“Now, dear Mrs. Hamilton, you will let her come, wont you? I have a pet scheme that I haven’t told you yet. I want to be dressed just like Alice. Wont that be nice, Allie? And we can do it, because I have two white dresses almost exactly alike. Mamma had so much of the same kind of stuff that she had two dresses made for me. So, you see, you can wear one and I the other, and we’ll both wear blue sashes, and look like sisters.”

Maud forgot, in her eager excitement, that both wearing white dresses and blue sashes would not transform totally different complexions and features into the resemblance of sisterhood.

Alice’s pure, pale complexion and glowing dark eyes contrasted well with her own rosy hue, golden locks, and laughing blue orbs. Maud’s cheeks were the color of a luscious peach painted by the sun and light of heaven, while Alice’s more nearly resembled a white rose in its hueless loveliness. Indeed, her father had often playfully called her his white rosebud, from the colorless purity of her complexion. There was no suspicion of ill health, however, in the full, clear eye, the coral lips, and the firm, rounded limbs. If the expression of her face was thoughtful, almost to sadness, it was also sometimes full of joyous light, and her smile was as gladsome

and her laugh as merry as that of childhood is wont to be.

Mrs. Hamilton at last gave her consent, and Maud threw her arms around her neck and imprinted a grateful kiss on the fair, delicate cheek. "O Miss Mabel!" she exclaimed, suddenly turning to her, "what a crazy, forgetful child I am! I beg your pardon. Mamma told me—let me see—I was to give her love to you, and ask you if you will join us on Wednesday evening. It isn't going to be a party, you know, Miss Mabel; only a few of mamma's friends, and some little girls, friends of mine."

"Maudie, dear," said Mabel, "please tell mamma that I thank her very much for her kind invitation, but that it will be impossible for me to accept it. You know papa is sick, and it would not be right for me to go and leave mamma alone. Besides, I had rather not. Mamma will know why."

"Well," answered Maud, thoughtfully, "mamma will be very sorry, I know, although she said she was afraid you could not come. Good-bye, Allie, be sure and come early, and dress with me, will you?"

Alice gave the required promise, and, with an affectionate kiss, the two little girls separated, Maud to go home and give vent to her excitement in executing pirouettes, cutting up all sorts of antics, and frolicking with Harry, leaving Alice to think over the affectionate kindness of her friend, and wonder if she should enjoy herself among so many strangers. The

thought almost took her breath away at first, but she remembered that she was going to be with Maud, and that was happiness enough.

At last the long-looked-for Wednesday arrived, a perfect day as ever smiled upon this fair earth. The sweet May sunshine and balmy air poured fresh hope and vigor into many a weary frame and despondent heart. Hyacinths, tulips, and other flowers were lifting up their bright heads as though thanking the Giver of all good things for the blessed spring-time, the seed-time of earth, when she opens her broad bosom to receive into it that from which she will yield us, in return, a generous harvest.

Maud's friends were invited at an earlier hour than the older guests, and so, in accordance with her promise, as the day drew near its close, Alice started, with a beating heart and her mother's kiss yet warm upon her cheek, while the gentle "God bless you, darling!" was still sounding in her ears. What is there, this side of heaven, so full of pure tenderness as a pious mother's gentle kiss and low-breathed blessing? Alice was received with open arms, and the white dress and blue sash, which were in readiness for her, were quickly put on, and she was pronounced ready for presentation to the guests, who would shortly arrive. Very pretty she looked in the snowy dress, which fitted her lithe figure better than might have been expected had it been known that it was made to suit Maud's plump proportions. The long, dark hair floating around her

shoulders, the sparkle in the large eyes, and the faint glow which the unwonted excitement had painted upon the smooth cheek, made her a very pleasant sight to look upon.

“O, Alice, how sweet you look!” exclaimed Maud.

“’Es, Allie, oo ook awful pittty,” echoed Harry.

“Not half as pretty as you, you little darling,” she answered, running after him and trying to capture the frolicsome little pet.

“Harry,” she exclaimed, “I want a dozen kisses!”

“Oo tant have ’em,” he said, playfully. “Oo tant have but dis one, taus, don’ oo tee, tumbody es ’ll ’ant tum too.”

The guests now began to arrive—at least the younger portion of them. Alice was presented to each one with a grace and courtesy which were as amusing as they were admirable. “My friend, Miss Alice Hamilton,” was the recipient of the most delicate and thoughtful attentions.

After a while a group of the larger girls, among whom were Lou Wentworth and one or two more of Maud’s school-mates, withdrew themselves to a corner of the room, and Maud, whose eyes and ears were suspiciously open, saw haughty glances cast toward the spot where she and Alice were standing. Presently she caught the low-spoken words, “associate,” “pauper,” “insult.”

In anxiety that Alice should not see and hear what she already knew, she hurried her away.

“Come, Allie, let’s go and find some of the girls and get up a nice game. It’s too stupid staying here.”

But Maud’s precautions were taken too late. Drawing her through an open door which led into the conservatory, Alice exclaimed, with heaving breast and quivering lip, “O, Maud, I must go home. I cannot stay here. Those girls are talking about me; they despise me because I am poor.”

“Never mind!” was the indignant reply. “Don’t mind them, Allie.”

Maud was too truthful to deny, or to pretend that she did not know this to be a fact, and she was somewhat puzzled to know what it was best to do to soothe Alice’s wounded feelings. But her sure safeguard came to her relief—her undoubting faith in her mother’s skill and ability to do any thing short of working a miracle. Here was the stronghold to which she always resorted in all her difficulties, and she was certain it would not fail her now. Why can we not all of us, at all times, under all circumstances, go with this trusting faith to Him whose love is dearer, more tender, and more powerful than even that of a mother?

Bursting into a fit of uncontrollable weeping, the sensitive child burst out, “O, Maud, let me go home. I can’t see those girls again. They called me a pauper, and I know what that means.”

“Nonsense, Allie! It’s no one but that silly Lou

Wentworth. I'm sorry I asked her to come. You stay here, Allie dear, and I'll go and tell mamma. You needn't be ashamed to be seen," she added, looking back as she left the room, "for you look a great deal prettier and sweeter and more lady-like than any of them."

As Maud approached her mother she found her in close conversation with Mrs. Dunbar, a lady whom she knew to be one of her most intimate friends. Standing near by until they should be disengaged, a conversation fell upon her ear, which, as it so perfectly accorded with the subject uppermost in her mind, entirely engrossed her attention.

Mrs. Dunbar, who had been, unaccountably to herself, attracted by Alice in the early part of the evening, kept wondering what was the subtle influence which seemed to draw her irresistibly toward the pale, shy child who seemed a stranger to almost every one but Maud. Suddenly the electric chain of memory flashed across her mind, and instantly there rose up before her the fair face and willowy form of her girlhood's dearest friend.

Crossing the room, with an irresistible impulse, she laid her hand upon Mrs. Morrison's arm, saying, eagerly, "My dear Mrs. Morrison, may I ask the name of that little girl whom I have seen so much with Maud this evening? She resembles so much a former friend of mine, whom I once loved so dearly."

"Her name is Hamilton," was the reply, "and she is a very sweet, engaging child. Maud is extremely fond of her; indeed, they are almost inseparable."

"Hamilton!" repeated the other lady, reflectively. "I do not know whether that was the name of the gentleman whom my friend married or not. We were school-mates and kept up our intimacy until after my marriage, when I went abroad, where I resided for several years, and our correspondence finally ceased."

"Then you have not seen her since her marriage?" asked Mrs. Morrison.

"No," was the answer given in a tone of extreme regret. "She was a sweet, lovely girl, and I would give much to renew the acquaintance. This little girl has reminded me of her so forcibly that my old affection seems renewed and intensified. She has the same spiritual eyes and mobile features. It does not seem possible that they can belong to any one but the child of Isabel. Do you know, dear Mrs. Morrison, what her maiden name was?"

"I do not," replied Mrs. Morrison. "I only know that Mr. Hamilton was formerly a merchant, that they have met with many reverses, and that they are now in somewhat destitute circumstances. I have met Mrs. Hamilton frequently, and know her to be a woman of exquisite sensibilities. Although she is faded and worn because of anxiety and illness, I can readily believe her to have been in youth a very beautiful and attractive woman."

At this moment Mrs. Morrison became aware that Maud was waiting impatiently to speak to her, so turning toward her she said, in her usual gentle tones, "Well, daughter?"

"O, mamma," was the reply, "Alice is in the conservatory, crying ready to break her heart!"

"Crying! what should she cry for? She is not ill, I hope?"

"I can't tell you now, mamma, because—" here she hesitated and blushed slightly as she became aware of Mrs. Dunbar's close proximity. "O, mamma, please come, and let Allie tell you herself."

"Well," answered Mrs. Morrison, "I suppose I must go, if Mrs. Dunbar will excuse me, and try my skill at heart-mending. I fancy it will not be a very difficult task. Little girl's broken hearts are usually put together pretty easily."

With a bow and smile to the lady she followed Maud to the conservatory, where they looked in vain for the little white-robed figure, which was nowhere to be seen.

"Why, mamma!" exclaimed Maud, in turn, "Where can she be?" and darting off, she ran up stairs in search of the missing child. Just as Mrs. Morrison turned to leave the room a smothered sob fell on her ear. Following the direction indicated by the sound, she approached an immense tub containing a large and beautiful flowering azalea. Here, crouched down behind this friendly shelter, sat the

object of her search, with bowed head and trembling frame.

"Alice! my dear little girl, what are you doing here?" she asked, as she gently drew the little form to her close embrace.

The flood-gates were freshly opened at these sympathetic tones, and the weary head reposed upon the loving, motherly bosom, as she sobbed out,

"O! dear Mrs. Morrison, please let me go home!"

"Go home, Allie dear! Why do you wish that, darling? Are you ill? If so, we will try and make you feel better."

"O no, no, I am not ill," replied the still weeping child.

With loving, caressing words, such as a tender Christian woman knows so well how to employ, she won from the trembling lips all the story of the wounded little heart.

"Never mind!" she said, in soft, soothing tones; "it may be, Allie dear, that these little girls are more thoughtless than wicked, and perhaps they have not kind Christian parents, as you and Maud have, to teach them better. It may be the fault of their education; if so, it is not at all strange, dear, that they do not remember that Jesus our Saviour was so poor that he even had no home; that he was not born, as they and you were, in a pleasant and comfortable home, but in a stable; and that his cradle was a manger from which the cattle had eaten their food.

So, Allie, don't think any more of those foolish little girls, but think of that dear Saviour, the Lord of life and glory—of how he loves little children, and sympathizes with them in all their sorrows."

The heavy sobs had ceased, and the sweet, thoughtful face was lifted to that of the speaker, as the trembling voice uttered, "Thank you, dear Mrs. Morrison, you have done me so much good. You are just like my own dear mamma. She talks to me just as sweetly as you have done."

"Now," was the smiling reply, "you don't want to go home to mamma, I am sure, with that tear-stained face."

"No, O, no! I don't want mamma to see that I have been crying. It would trouble her, and I wouldn't worry dear mamma for the world."

"That is right, dear, and I have a nice plan in my head. Now listen, while I tell you what it is."

Alice was all attention, as indeed she had been all the time, and Mrs. Morrison proceeded: "John shall go and ask mamma's permission for you to spend the night with Maud, and to-morrow we will go and have a nice drive."

"Here, Maud," called Mrs. Morrison, as her little daughter passed the door in frantic haste, "here is Alice. Take her up stairs and ask Mary to bathe her face, and then go and find the little girls, who are probably wondering where you both are all this time. I must go now and join my guests. Go and be as

happy as larks ;” and giving each an affectionate kiss, she left them, as they tripped lightly up stairs to follow her directions.

After having their faces bathed and their somewhat disordered dresses rearranged, they came down again looking as fresh and smiling as though nothing had happened to mar their evening’s enjoyment. They were soon deep in the mysteries of “Copenhagen,” “Hide the Handkerchief,” and other games in which little girls delight. Lou Wentworth and one or two other little girls tossed their heads in contempt of such childish play, and preferred remaining down stairs to watch the older people. Finally becoming tired of this, they strayed off to the apartment whence merry sounds proclaimed the whereabouts of the happy group of boys and girls who were having, as they said, “lots of fun.” Their dissatisfied looks and manner had no power to dampen the ardor of the others, although they repeatedly refused to participate in their pleasures. Even Alice was unaffected by it, for she remembered Mrs. Morrison’s words, and the sunshine had so entirely filled her heart that there was no room for the dark clouds of anger or discontent to find entrance there.



CHAPTER III.

ON returning to the parlor, Mrs. Morrison found Mrs. Dunbar still eager to pursue her inquiries in regard to the friend of her early days. Her enthusiastic nature was fully aroused, and with her a subject, once started, had no rest until it was satisfactorily disposed of.

“Do you think,” she asked, “that I might speak to the little girl and ascertain if she is really Isabel’s child? My heart warms toward her already; the resemblance is so strong that I cannot help loving her for that.”

“Without doubt,” replied Mrs. Morrison, involuntarily smiling at her friend’s enthusiasm. “As soon as I can do so I will call her, and then you can speak to her about it.”

Acting upon her promise she quietly withdrew, beckoning Mrs. Dunbar to follow; and pointing to the conservatory, she said, “Go in there, and I will bring her to you.”

Alice was busily engaged, but cheerfully obeyed Mrs. Morrison’s gently spoken “Allie dear, I want to see you a moment.”

Then leading her up to Mrs. Dunbar, she said,

"Here is a friend who would like to talk to you a little while. You will excuse me," she added, smilingly, "you know I must play the part of hostess, and my friends will think me very neglectful if I remain away longer."

"Come here, little one," began Mrs. Dunbar, holding out her hand with an encouraging smile, "So your name is Alice Hamilton, is it?"

"Yes ma'am," replied the child, looking up at her with wondering eyes.

Mrs. Dunbar, as was her habit, plunged at once into the matter by saying,

"Do you know, my dear little girl, that you look very much like a lady who was once a very dear friend of mine?"

"Do I?" replied Alice, innocently. "They say I look like mamma."

"Do you know," was the next eager inquiry, "what was your mamma's name?"

"Mrs. Hamilton," answered the child, gravely, with all a child's simplicity.

"Yes, yes, my dear," with a slight shade of impatience; "but can you tell me what her name was before she married your papa?"

"I know papa calls her Isabel," she replied, smiling. "He often says it is a sweet name."

"I thought so!" Then, a bright thought striking her, she asked, "Is your grandma living, my dear?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Alice, wondering at what seemed to her the irrelevancy of the question.

"What is her name?" asked the indefatigable questioner, thinking at last she was coming to the root of the matter.

"Grandma Hamilton," was the quiet reply.

"O!" was the disappointed exclamation; "but haven't you another grandma, Alice?"

"No, ma'am; Grandma Warner died last summer."

"There, I knew it!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar, in a delighted tone. "It is my dear friend Isabel, and you are her child. My dear little Alice, I love you already, for your mother's sake. I wonder if she remembers me? I must see her. Did you ever hear her speak of Mabel Winthrop?"

"O! yes, ma'am," replied Alice. "Why, that's my sister's name. I have often heard mamma say that Mabel was named after a friend of hers."

"Dear Isabel!" murmured Mrs. Dunbar, while tears filled her eyes as she thought of all she must have suffered since the termination of their intimacy. She remembered Isabel Warner as a bright and petted daughter of wealth and luxury, and to her, whose life had been passed on "flowery beds of ease," the change was great indeed, and, according to her view, correspondingly great must be the unhappiness attending it. She was sorely puzzled for awhile, feeling that she must see her old friend, and yet feeling that that friend might not wish, in her altered

circumstances, to renew a friendship of her bright and happy girlhood.

At last, drawing Alice in a still closer embrace, and imprinting an affectionate kiss on her smooth, pure brow, she said, smiling through her tears,

“Allie, dear, will you tell mamma that you have seen her friend, Mabel Winthrop, who loves her just as much as when we were girls together? Ask her if I may call and see her, will you, darling? I am going to excuse myself to Mrs. Morrison and go home. I want to be alone to think over this strange adventure. Good-night, dear. Try to persuade mamma to let me come and see her, wont you, Alice?”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Alice, wondering almost as much as did Mrs. Dunbar at the unlooked-for circumstance which had brought them together.

Going in pursuit of her hostess, Mrs. Dunbar found her dispensing smiles and acts of graceful hospitality to all around her. Intent as she was, to all outward appearance, only on promoting the enjoyment of her guests, her thoughts made frequent excursions to the conservatory, where she had left her friend and Alice. She was much interested in the affair, hoping that Mrs. Hamilton had indeed found a true and faithful friend. Seeing Mrs. Dunbar approaching, she moved easily from group to group without attracting any especial attention, and advanced toward her with a sweet smile full of sympathy and affection, the spontaneous outgrowth of an unselfish heart. Laying her

hand upon her arm as they passed out together, Mrs. Dunbar said :

“ My dear Mrs. Morrison, I know you will excuse me at this early hour, but I must be alone and think over this strange discovery. There are so many memories clustering around my heart to-night, that I want to live over again my happy girlhood.”

“ Then you have discovered that Alice is really the child of your early friend ? ” asked Mrs. Morrison, in a tone of much interest.

“ O, yes,” was the reply. “ She is a sweet child, the exact counterpart of Isabel. I must see her,” she continued, in some excitement, then hesitating ; “ but she was such a proud, sensitive creature. You do not think, in the changed position of affairs, she will refuse to see me, do you ? ”

“ No, Mrs. Dunbar, I hardly think she will carry that feeling so far with one whom she has known and loved. Mrs. Hamilton is, as you say, proud and sensitive, but her pride and sensibility have been chastened and tempered by the fires of affliction. She is a Christian, a sweet type of womanly Christian character, and I have no doubt will receive you joyfully. Did you intimate to Alice your desire to visit her mother ? ”

“ Yes,” was the thoughtful rejoinder ; “ I sent a request to her that I might be permitted to do so. Alice seemed so embarrassed when I spoke of it that I thought perhaps she would be unwilling to see me.”

"I visit them quite often," answered Mrs. Morrison, in a slightly hesitating manner, "and if it will please you, or in any way relieve your embarrassment, I will explain to her your delicacy in the matter, and your desire to renew your former intimacy."

"Thank you," she answered, gratefully, "if you will I shall be so grateful. O, Mrs. Morrison," she added, with much feeling, "when I knew Isabel Warner she was a lovely girl, the idolized daughter of wealthy parents, whose chief object in life seemed to be to minister to her enjoyment. I cannot understand how the wheel can have made so complete a revolution that, from being one of the upper spokes, I find her now on the under side. That is one of the things which is beyond my comprehension."

"Beyond the comprehension of any of us poor, short-sighted mortals," was the gentle answer; "but perfectly understood by Him, 'whose are all our ways.'"

After settling that Mrs. Morrison should accompany Alice home on the following day, and deliver the message intrusted to her, the two friends separated, Mrs. Morrison to return to her guests, and Mrs. Dunbar to repair to the quiet of her own room, where she might indulge in a long, long retrospect.

Maud's delight knew no bounds when she became aware that Alice was to spend the night with her. "O, Allie!" she exclaimed, hopping around joyfully, what a nice time we will have. Mamma has

promised me a holiday, so that we can have a whole long day to play. Just think! we have never been so long together before in all our lives, have we, Allie?"

"No," replied Alice, in the simple, matter-of-fact way so natural to her. "Perhaps you will get tired of me, Maud, and never want to see me again."

"Now, Allie," answered Maud, "that is so like you." Then giving her sunny head a most vigorous shake, and looking Alice archly in the eye, she continued, "You don't suppose I'm so fickle as that, do you? Do you ever think any body likes you, Allie?"

"Not much," replied Allie, innocently.

"Then you are very much mistaken," was the decided reply of the enthusiastic little lady, "for I've heard papa and mamma say what a nice little girl you are, and how much they like to have me play with you, because you are so quiet and lady-like."

Alice made no reply, but her pleased look gratified Maud exceedingly, and she went on with almost breathless eagerness,

"O, I'm so glad Lou Wentworth and all the girls are gone; now I can have you all to myself."

True sentiment of every son and daughter of Eve, to wish to a greater or less extent to appropriate to self the beloved object. Of all her playmates, there was not one whom she loved as she did Alice, so that she was perfectly sincere in her expressions of attachment. There was about her a depth and sincerity of

character which rendered her even now, although so young, a valuable friend. All the ardor of a warm and enthusiastic temperament had been called into exercise by her acquaintance with Alice, and the unselfish little heart kept the brain planning schemes for her friend's benefit and pleasure.

Mrs. Morrison's gentle voice now broke in upon the conversation, as she said,

"Come, little ladies, it is high time you were preparing for rest. You have had an unusual amount of excitement to-day. Let Mary assist you to undress immediately. Try to go to sleep at once, and leave all your talking until to-morrow. You will have a nice, long day. Harry's blue eyes have been closed a long time. Then, pressing her darling's rosy lips, and kissing each little girl affectionately, she withdrew.

"Come, Miss Maud," said Mary, as the child stood toying with the narrow gold bands which she had just removed from the chubby arms. "The two eyes are just startin' out of yer head wid the wild doin's yer had, and Miss Alice looks fit to drop. Let me git yez in bed quick, or ye'll niver be wantin' to git up in the mornin'. It's slapin' the whole blessed day yez 'ill be."

"Don't you believe that," answered Maud, stoutly. "Alice and I have lots of fun on hand for to-morrow, haven't we, Alice?"

"Yes," replied Alice, with a faint attempt at a

smile ; but the drooping eye and languid tone told of extreme physical exhaustion.

"Ah! indade," said the kind-hearted Irish girl. "Miss Alice is more dead than alive. Let me do that, dearie," she said, as Alice was trying to unfasten the broad, blue sash which, at Maud's request, had been provided for her.

Mary's deft fingers soon accomplished the disrobing process, and lifting the unresisting little form, she laid her gently down. The weary head had scarce touched the pillow ere she was wrapped in the sweet refreshing slumber of childhood.

Two hours later, when Mrs. Morrison, before retiring, looked in, as usual, upon her sleeping children, she found Maud and Alice in a close embrace. Maud's cheeks were flushed with the hue of health, and her long golden curls fell over the pillow in careless profusion, making a charming picture of childish innocence ; while Alice's cheeks and brow were of marble whiteness, contrasting almost painfully with the luxuriant dark hair and the coral lips, which were slightly parted, revealing the small, even teeth within. She lay motionless, and Mrs. Morrison almost started as she looked upon that which so closely resembled the last dreamless slumber. The strong contrast between her own bright, healthful Maud, and the fair, fragile beauty of her little bed-fellow, impressed the mother deeply.

Passing into the nursery, she approached the crib,

where lay little four-year-old Harry. The golden rings of his bright hair lay loose and damp upon the broad white brow ; the bright eyes were closed, and the long lashes swept the rosy cheeks, while upon the sweet, dimpled mouth rested a happy smile. The mother gazed upon the lovely semblance of peace and purity, thinking, "Here, surely, is a 'fit temple for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.' O, that he may always be kept 'safe in the arms of Jesus !' "

Then, kneeling by the side of the unconscious object of a Christian mother's holiest earthly love, and with swelling heart and moistened eyes, she prayed for her own darlings and for "the stranger who was within her gates," commending them all to the watchful care of the "Guardian of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps."

"Maud, are you awake?" asked Alice, softly, the next morning.

"Yes," answered Maud, drowsily, "but I'm awfully sleepy. Aint you, Allie?"

"No," said Alice, "I was just wondering how the angels feel in the morning."

"What, when they first wake up, do you mean?" asked Maud, too sleepy to think much about angels or any thing else.

"O no ! I don't believe they do wake up. I guess they don't go to sleep at all as we do, because you know, Maudie, they don't get tired as we do ;" but

Alice was pursuing her theological disquisition unheeded, for Maud was fast asleep.

The sun was streaming brightly in through the open windows, and the birds were trilling their gushing morning songs of praise; but, fatigued with thinking and with last night's unusual effort, Alice, too, was soon wrapped in a quiet slumber. Waking an hour later, she found Maud sitting up in bed, rubbing her eyes, and looking at her as though trying to recall her scattered senses.

"O Allie!" she exclaimed, "it seems so funny to have you here with me when I wake up, and so nice," she added, impulsively, "I wish you were here all the time. O, wouldn't it be nice if you were my sister? You could go to school with me, you know, and take music lessons, and play with me, and—and—and love me. I do wish you were!"

"Do you?" asked Alice, in a listless, absent sort of way. "O, Maud, I've just had such a lovely dream! I thought an angel, with beautiful, shining wings, came to me and asked me how I felt this morning."

"O," interrupted Maud, clapping her hands, "how funny! I wish one would come to me."

"Sh-h!" said Alice, raising her hand with an awed gesture, "I haven't told you all yet. He said that he came from heaven, and that it was, O! such a beautiful place. I think this earth is very beautiful, but he said that heaven was a great deal more so. He said his name was Gabriel, and that he was going to

be my guardian all the time while I live here, and that when God is ready to take me to heaven he would come for me."

"I wonder what that means," said Maud, thoughtfully. "We'll ask mamma by and by."

"What? Guardian?" asked Alice. "O! I think I know what it means. I don't know as I can tell you exactly, Maudie, but I think it means that he is going to take care of me as long as I live."

"Isn't that nice?" exclaimed Maud. "I wonder if he wont take care of me, too."

"Well, you know, God takes care of us all, but may be he sends angels to do it, just as your mamma, when you want any thing, doesn't go and do it herself alone, but she sends a servant. I wonder if this angel will come for me soon. O, Maud," she exclaimed, bursting into tears, "my papa is going to die, I know! I do hope *he* will come for him—the angel I saw, I mean, he was so beautiful and kind."

Maud threw her arms around the neck of the *spirituelle* little creature, on whose long lashes the tears were still trembling. "Don't talk so, Allie. I know what made you dream that, because, don't you remember, you were talking to me about angels before you went to sleep. That was it, I know," she added, triumphantly; "so don't think any more about it now, and by and by you can tell mamma, if you like."

Alice made no reply, but relapsed into a dreamy silence, from which Maud, with the natural versatility

of her disposition, aroused her by saying, in joyous tones, "O, it's just a splendid day, and we're going to have a splendid time." Here Maud's ecstasies were interrupted by the entrance of Mary, and the attention of both was so much occupied by the duties of the bath-room and toilet that the angel was not further discussed, and, by one at least, was forgotten.

Mrs. Morrison was a judicious as well as an indulgent mother, and, knowing that both little girls would weary of a whole day spent in play, she had provided amusement of a different character. So, calling Maud, as they were leaving the breakfast-room, she said, "When you and Alice get tired of playing, come to me and I will find something else for you to do."

They were soon immersed in the pleasures of the play-room, and Alice's dark eyes and pale features were lighted up with an unusual glow as she became absorbed in examining Maud's wealth of childish treasures. The dolls were undressed and put to bed for their morning nap, the wardrobe examined, commented upon, and admired, and, the nap having been finished, the inanimate objects of their care and solicitude must be taken out for an airing in their carriage. With the true motherly instinct, which exists in most feminine breasts, they passed the morning pleasantly in petting and fondling the dolls, and in those amusements which are so dear to the heart of a little girl.

At last, becoming somewhat weary, Maud sug-

gested that they should go and see what new pleasure her mother had in store for them. Mrs. Morrison produced a geographical puzzle, in which it was ingeniously arranged that the climate, productions, and nationalities of every part of the globe should be properly assorted and put together.

The knowledge of both was severely taxed, and they were often obliged to apply to their kind entertainer for assistance. So busily occupied and so happy had they been, that no thought of the angel had entered their heads until, at luncheon, Maud cast her eye upon a picture in which the representation of one was placed in a conspicuous position.

"O, mamma," she exclaimed, "Alice dreamed that she talked with an angel."

"Did you, Alice, dear?" asked Mrs. Morrison, in an encouraging tone. "That must have been a pleasant and profitable conversation, I should imagine."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Alice, blushing deeply. "But, Maud, I don't think I talked with him, for I don't believe I answered him at all. I was too much—not frightened exactly—I don't know quite what it was;" and she looked up at Mrs. Morrison with an appealing look.

"Awed, I suppose you mean," she replied, gently. "A sort of solemnity that you dare not break; wasn't that it, dear?"

"O, thank you! that was just it."

“What is a guardian angel, mamma?” interrupted Maud. “He told her that he would be her guardian angel. Alice says she thinks she knows what it means, but I don’t.”

“A guardian angel,” answered Mrs. Morrison, “is one who is supposed to have the special charge of a particular person, to supply his wants, to keep or guard him from evil influences, and from yielding to temptation.”

After much persuasion Alice was induced to relate her dream, and ended by asking Mrs. Morrison, “Don’t you think we all have guardian angels?”

“There is no doubt, my dear child,” she replied, “that whether we have the agency of any particular angel or not, a kind and watchful care is exercised over us, and that our heavenly Father, by his Holy Spirit, is influencing us for good.”

“I should like to think,” said Maud, “that an angel was always near me, watching me, because then it for me would be easier for me to be good.”

“Maud, dear, would you rather please an angel than to please the dear Saviour who loves you so much more than an angel can, and has done so much more for you?”

“Why, no, mamma,” she replied, looking up, doubtfully.

“Well, my dear, let this be your motive for trying to do right—that the Saviour is always watching beside you, and is grieved when you do wrong.”

"Thank you, mamma," she answered, thoughtfully, "I will try to remember."

"Now," said Mrs. Morrison, rising from the table with a bright smile, "we must prepare for our drive, for I promised to deliver this little lady safely to her mother."

The two little girls scampered away, and were soon enjoying the beauties of Central Park. The fresh, clear air of that lovely May-day seemed like balm, or a draught of pure, strength-giving cordial, infusing new life into Alice's delicate frame, and rendering Maud's naturally jubilant spirits almost hilarious.

As they drew near Alice's home she slipped her slender little hand into that of her friend, saying, timidly,

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Morrison. I have had such a nice time!"

"My dear little girl," was the gentle answer, "you shall have such a nice time often. Whenever mamma can spare you, you are always welcome to stay with Maud and share her pleasure."

The carriage stopped, and no reply was made; but the bright tears which gathered in the dark eyes, and the grateful, wistful expression, were more eloquent than words.

Mrs. Morrison alighted and entered the house, to fulfill her promise to Mrs. Dunbar, where for the present we will leave her.



CHAPTER IV.

THE morning after the incidents recorded in the last chapter, Lou Wentworth entered her mother's sitting-room, after a late breakfast, with a dissatisfied expression of countenance, and in a fretful voice drawled out,

"O, I'm awful tired. I didn't have a good time last night a bit."

"Didn't have a good time!" said her mother, looking up languidly from a luxurious lounge, in whose springy depths she was cosily ensconced, "How was that?"

"O, I don't know," answered Lou, a little ashamed of the part she had played. "Alice Hamilton was there, that little girl that Maud is so crazy about, and I didn't want to play with her, and it was awful stupid."

"Play with her, indeed!" was the mother's reply. "I'm glad you have self-respect enough to keep from associating with such trash. I'm surprised that Mrs. Morrison allows Maud to be so intimate with her."

"O," replied Lou, quickly, "Mrs. Morrison likes to have Maud play with her. She makes a great deal more of her than she does of me."

"Well," replied the mother, rousing up from her

attitude of listless *ennui*, "if Mrs. Morrison allows her daughter to associate with paupers, I shall certainly withhold my consent to your visiting her. The idea of bringing in that pauper child to associate with my daughter! It is an insult, and I shall resent it by refusing all further invitations which you may receive from them. Remember, I forbid you holding any intercourse with Maud in future, even in school."

Lou, who was an apt scholar of her worldly teacher, answered, pertly, "You needn't be alarmed. I don't want to go there any more than you want me to. The Morrisons are so dreadfully good and particular that I don't feel good there."

"Particular!" answered Mrs. Wentworth, with a slight sneer. "They don't seem to be very particular in their choice of associates for their daughter, to say the least of it."

Lou had unconsciously expressed the very feeling which is entertained by many a one on whose head rests the weight of more years than she had ever known. It was the feeling of the incongruity, the lack of congeniality, between those who serve God and those who serve him not. Though the white robes of the saint may, by the grace of God, remain unsoiled and spotless by the contact, yet the purity of character and the daily life of the one are a constant, although it may be an unacknowledged, reproach to the other, or, as Lou's childish mind expressed it, *they do not "feel good."* "For what fellowship hath

righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

Mrs. Wentworth, as the above conversation will show, was a weak-minded woman of limited education, who had been lifted to her present affluent circumstances by one of those seeming accidents out of which Providence so often works grand and wonderful results. Early in life she married a poor young man, who was clerk on a small salary in a clothing store. Being steady and industrious, he managed to save a small sum, with which he speculated, on an exceedingly limited scale, of course; but the small beginnings, like the ten talents, gained other ten, and thus, gathering courage from his success, he increased his risks, until, having lunched out on a gigantic venture, he secured his present colossal fortune. Like many another of fortune's favorites, Mrs. Wentworth, not having sufficient mental ballast to bear so sudden and so immense an elevation, immediately began to hold her head above all whose establishments were not on a scale of equal elegance with her own. As her head was exceedingly light, and her physical proportions amounted to a good solid weight in avoirdupois, what wonder that she sometimes lost her mental balance and became guilty of sundry indiscretions? Not unfrequently, since her accession to the dignity and splendor of her present position, had her pride been stung and insulted by allusions to her husband's

former occupation. Her indignation knew no bounds when, upon one occasion, she heard the remark from a former friend, whom now she never deigned to notice, that "Patty Wentworth needn't put on so many airs; her husband was nothing but a tailor, and used to sit cross-legged, with his goose alongside of him. Didn't she know all about it? How Patty used to sit and sew with him. Mebby she'd forgot all about them days."

Whether Mrs. Wentworth had forgotten these circumstances or not, it was very evident that her quondam friend still remembered them, and delighted occasionally to vex her ears by rehearsing them where she knew she could not fail to hear them.

The next Monday morning, at the recess, May Clement, one of Maud's school-mates, said to her, "Lou says she is not going to visit you any more, because you associate with paupers."

"Paupers!" exclaimed Maud, indignantly; "I know who she means by that. She was offended because I invited Alice Hamilton the other night. She is no pauper, if Lou does call her so; and mamma says that she is much more lady-like, in appearance and manner, than Lou herself. I love her dearly—she is a sweet girl. May, you ought to know her."

"She is a nice-looking girl," was the rather indifferent reply; but isn't she dreadfully poor, Maud?"

"What difference does that make?" asked Maud, quickly, the hot blood surging over neck and brow.

“Why, you know, poor people are not fit friends for us. It may be all right for us to go and see them, and give them money and things; but I don’t want a poor girl for my friend, do you?”

“Yes,” answered Maud, promptly, “if she is a nice girl. Alice Hamilton is just as good as you or I. They used to be very rich; but they grew poor, because her father lost all his money; I don’t exactly understand how, but he did, anyway, and now he is sick and can’t do any thing for them.”

“Well, but they live in a poor, mean place, and don’t dress nicely, as you and I do.”

“I don’t care any thing about that. My Sunday-school teacher said, yesterday, that it is Christlike to take the part of the poor and those who have no helper; and mamma says so, too; and she says that if Christ was not too proud to associate with and do good to those who are poor, that we ought not to be so.”

Thus did this fearless little champion fight the cause of her friend, determined that, no matter what others might say, she would closely adhere to this object of her warm affection.

Maud’s was no saintly nature, but rather essentially of the earth earthy; yet in her heroic little soul she bore a fearless independence which enabled her to espouse the unpopular side, and an instinct of protection toward any object less strong than herself. This disposition had always been fostered by her parents,

who most earnestly desired to see their child grow up a single-hearted follower of Him who was rocked in the cradle of poverty.

While Maud was so valiantly vindicating the cause of her gentle little friend, the latter, with equal or, perhaps, superior heroism, was bearing the pangs of a wounded spirit. Notwithstanding the saying of the sacred writer—"a wounded spirit, who can bear?"—many a poor frail child of dust goes through life with its corroding influence constantly at work. Like the heart of a tender flower, which hides itself beneath its delicate petals in order to avoid contact with the rude, cold breath of winter, or the furious blast of the rising storm, so did Alice withdraw into the warmth and shelter of the home circle. More and more did she hide within her own breast the almost morbid shrinking she entertained of again meeting such a shock to her highly-wrought sensitive feelings. She would never add a feather's weight to her mother's distress by revealing one pang that rent her childish heart, but into the sympathetic ears of her sister, Mabel she poured the tale of the mortification and grief which had so shaken her frame on the night of Maud's party.

"Never mind, darling," answered the affectionate counselor and friend; "we will cling the closer to each other. We ought not to murmur, Alice dear, because God has taken from us the luxury and splendor we used to enjoy. We can love each other just

as well, and perhaps we shall love him all the more, because we have not earthly pleasures to wean us from him."

Throwing her arms around her sister's neck, and bursting into a fresh paroxysm of weeping, she exclaimed, "O, Mabel, do you think God is going to take papa, too?"

Mabel's eyes became humid as she answered, "I fear he is, Allie darling, but we can give up even our father into the hands of One who loves him still better than we do; can we not, dearest?"

Alice did not reply for a moment, but the elder sister became conscious of a close pressure of the slender arms encircling her neck, and noted the tightening of the fingers already firmly interlaced, and knew that the brave little heart was nerving itself to its utmost tension.

Mabel tried with soothing, loving words to quiet the agitated child, and at length, with her head reposing on the bosom of her gentle sister, Alice related her dream, saying, as she concluded her description,

"O, Mabel, if papa is going to heaven, I hope that beautiful angel will come and take him."

Meantime Maud's active body and busy little brain were wholly engrossed by preparations which were being made for a grand closing "Reception" to be given by Mrs. Oakley's school. Our enthusiastic little friend had entered into the arrangements with

her usual impetuosity, and had thoroughly learned her part and rehearsed it times innumerable, lest by any possibility at the last and decisive moment her memory might prove recreant.

"O, mamma," she exclaimed, one day, "I believe I should die if I should fail."

"No, no, Maudie," was the calm reply; "I think it would take much more than that to kill you."

"But, only think, mamma, you will be there, and papa, and all those strange people. I should be so ashamed, I should feel awful."

Maud was not always very particular about her grammar when she was excited, but, seeing her mother's rising smile, she quickly added, "O, I mean, awfully."

"I do not think there would be any occasion to feel 'awfully,' as you express it, even though such a catastrophe should happen. Papa and I would both know that our little daughter had tried her very best, and probably others would know it also. While I should be very sorry not to have you do credit to your teachers as well as yourself, I do not think it would be, by any means, unpardonable. So, dear, I wouldn't think so much about it. Lay aside your part for the present. By keeping it so constantly in your mind, and dreading failure, you are becoming nervous and excited, and your brain will get so confused that you will be very likely to bring on the very thing you so much dread. Put on your hat now and run out in the garden. A breath of fresh air and a

chat with the birds and butterflies will freshen you up wonderfully.”

The good taste and judgment of the principal had lent their aid in the decoration of the rooms on the evening of the closing exercises. Rare exotics bloomed in every available spot, while the verdant and graceful smilax twined the pillars or drooped in graceful festoons. An exquisite flower piece, in the form of an angel with outstretched wings, was suspended from the ceiling by a wire so fine as to be almost invisible. As this symbol of an aerial visitant hovered over the heads of the assembled pupils, he seemed as though breathing from his perfumed wings a blessing from the spirit world.

Texts of Scripture, elegantly illuminated, on fields of snowy silk, were disposed about the room : one bearing the inscription, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found ;” another presented the invitation, “My daughter, give me thy heart ;” still another, “Praise ye the Lord ;” while upon a blue ground, exquisitely emblazoned in silver letters, were the words, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”

Precisely at eight o'clock the scholars marched in procession, singing the following hymn, composed and set to music for the occasion :

“School-mates and friends, dear Lord, to thee
We come, a little band,
And ask before thee, bending low,
A blessing at thy hand.

"To day we meet to part again,
To sever the bright chain
Whose golden links, through all our lives,
In memory shall remain.

"Perchance again within these walls
Each one her place may find;
The battle fight, the victory win,
With strong and eager mind.

"The race for knowledge may we win,
Knowledge, dear Lord, of thee.
O, open all our wondering eyes
Thy lovely form to see.

"It may be that in accents sweet
Thou mayest call to some,
With flute-like whisperings of love,
'My child, come home! come home!'

"Before Thee now, on bended knees,
With one uplifted heart,
We cry with one united voice,
O bless us ere we part."

Each pupil, as she reached her place, took a kneeling position, and as the last notes of the music died away on the evening air, the Rev. Dr. Parker arose to his feet and in a few appropriate and feeling words invoked upon the bowed heads before him the blessing of the Friend and Saviour of the young. Music and declamations followed each other with marked success, and the glorious June evening, whose every zephyr was perfume-laden, drew to a close with a general feeling of good-will and satisfaction on all sides. Poor Maud's fears proved groundless, as her part was performed most creditably and elicited much

approbation on the part of the audience. The only drawback to her pleasure was the absence of her dearest friend, but she had the satisfaction of a duty well done, a satisfaction which brings to a sensitive mind a sweet sense of peace and joy which no amount of forbidden pleasure can ever give. She learned also from this experience that a duty, however difficult of accomplishment, may be met and mastered if a sufficient amount of will and application be brought to bear upon it.

We left Alice as she descended from the carriage after their drive, and, with Mrs. Morrison, entered her own home. A strange and unwonted silence brooded over the house as Alice led the way into the room which served as a culinary department and general sitting-room. While Mr. Hamilton loved to have his family gathered about him, yet there were times when, by the nature of his disease, he was rendered so excessively nervous that the presence of any one but his wife became almost intolerable. Then it was that the loveliness of a true womanly character, refined and embellished by the pure graces of Christianity, shone forth with untarnished luster. The gentle tones, the unwearied efforts to afford relief, the soft touch of the cool fingers on the aching head, the tender bathing of the fevered brow—all these are offices which only a loving woman knows how to perform with satisfaction and acceptance to the sufferer. And how doubly pleasant and acceptable to the sick

and prostrate husband are they when offered by the hand of an affectionate Christian wife.

After inviting Mrs. Morrison to be seated, Alice passed on tiptoe into the adjoining room, where her quick eye at once detected the signs of suffering which were visible in the pallid face—almost as colorless as the snowy pillow upon which it reposed. As the eye of the invalid caught the slight form and the startled expression upon the sweet face, he stretched out his attenuated hand, saying:

“Come here, darling. Papa has been suffering very much, but his little White Rose must not be frightened. Jesus is with me, Alice dear, and you know, he

“‘can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.’”

Burying her face in the bed-clothes, Alice burst into a flood of tears; but as the long, slender fingers gently stroked the flowing dark hair, and spoke low, soothing words, she became calm, and remembered the presence of the visitor in the next room.

“O, mamma,” she exclaimed, through her tears, “I forgot to tell you, Mrs. Morrison is in the other room.” Then bursting out afresh, she sobbed: “O, papa, papa, you are not going to die and leave your little Alice; tell me you are not!”

“I believe not just now, darling, but in all probability, before very long, God will call me away from pain and suffering to be with him and the blessed

Saviour, where I shall never be sick any more. It may be dark here, but there is light ahead. It is all brightness there. Ask mamma and Mrs. Morrison to come in here. She is a good friend, and I may not have an opportunity of seeing her many times before I go."

Alice obeyed, and as Mrs. Morrison clasped the hand which was burning with fever, and noted the calm expression of the placid features—an index of the peace which reigned within—the words of Balaam occurred to her with double significance, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

"You see," he said, with a smile full of heavenly sweetness, "I am slowly nearing the river, although my feet have not yet reached the brink."

"Yes," replied she, "but the river is not dark and turbid."

"O no," was the eager response. "It is luminous; each wave glows with the Saviour's presence. Each wave, did I say? There are no waves, only gentle ripples, and such are radiant with heavenly light. There is nothing dreadful, my dear friend, in the prospect of death to a believer. No darkness, no anxiety; it is all bright and cheery."

"No," she answered, gently. "It is only going home. But, Mr. Hamilton, I do not apprehend that the end is very near."

"No, my physician assures me that I may live

some weeks, but I begin to have glimpses of the heavenly land, and the fragrance of the grapes of Eschol is wafted to me across the narrow stream."

"It must be a delightful prospect," replied Mrs. Morrison, thoughtfully, as she watched the rapt expression of his countenance, already kindling with the glory to be revealed.

"Glorious!" he answered. "I have but one regret, and that is leaving my dear ones; but they are in the hands of a God of infinite goodness, who will always be a friend of the widow and the fatherless. I have no fears. O, Mrs. Morrison, the experience of the prophet has been mine also: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.'"

"He is a faithful promiser," she replied, "and you may rest assured that your family will never be friendless or unprotected. Both Mr. Morrison and myself will always be ready to assist them whenever necessity requires, and they may look to us at all times for sympathy and companionship."

"Thank you!" he answered, with a grateful look and a warm pressure of the hand. "You have both proved yourselves good and true friends. I trust that the promise, that 'He that watereth shall be watered also himself,' will be abundantly verified to you."

"By the way," she said, quickly, turning with a smile to Mrs. Hamilton, "I have discovered an old friend of yours who is extremely anxious to see you. She was visiting at my house last evening, and was

attracted toward Alice by her close resemblance to you."

"Whom can you mean?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, in a dazed sort of manner. "I know no one who can be very anxious to see me now."

"It was Mrs. Dunbar. She says that you and she were school-mates, and she is all impatience to be allowed to visit you."

"O!" exclaimed her listener, with moistened eyes, "I shall be delighted to see her. Dear Mabel! She was always a warm-hearted, affectionate creature, and I believe she will be a real comfort to me."

Mr. Hamilton fixed his eyes with an expression of intense admiration and affection on the face of his wife, as he asked, with a trusting smile, "Then you have no lurking pride in the matter which will mar your pleasure in meeting the dearest friend of your happy, prosperous youth?"

"None," she answered, promptly. "Not the slightest. Mabel has too true and noble a heart to admit of such a feeling on either side."

"She spoke of that," said Mrs. Morrison, "and restrained her impatience lest she might appear intrusive. She is a widow, with ample means, and retains all her old girlish affection for you. So, you see, God has raised up another friend for you. You know he is 'ever mindful of his covenant,' and will never forsake those who put their trust in him.



CHAPTER V.

VACATION at last! The last problem has been solved, the last lesson recited, the last task completed. Desks have been searched for any remaining treasures that may be lurking in their hidden recesses; slates have been cleaned, and books put away with a sigh of relief. Already hundreds of miles have been traveled, the intervening distance having been accomplished on the wings of imagination, and all the delights of a two-months' sojourn in the country, in anticipation, enjoyed over and over again. The carriage is standing at the door, and Maud and Harry can scarcely restrain their impatience to be gone. Mrs. Morrison, with her usual thoughtful kindness, has prevailed upon Alice's parents to allow her to accompany her own family on their annual visit to see her mother, who lives on a farm in one of the rich, generous valleys of our own Empire State. The pale face and thoughtful air of the *spirituelle* child had awakened her maternal solicitude, and she had often expressed to Mr. Morrison her idea that Alice was too pure and good for earth. She well knew the kind motherly heart which beat beneath the plain exterior of Grandma Rodman, and hoped

that the genial influences which emanated from the old lady to all around her, together with the pure, exhilarating air and good wholesome food, might act as so many tonics. While Mr. Hamilton dreaded the parting with his favorite child, whom he might never enfold in another close embrace, or upon whose face he might never again look with his natural eyes, yet his unselfish heart induced him most gladly to consent to a separation which might prove to her an incalculable benefit.

Maud was as yet in utter ignorance of the pleasure awaiting her in Alice's company, and as they stood together upon the stone steps of her own home, she exclaimed, with a sudden bear-like hug, "O, Alice, I am so sorry to leave you!"

Then with a sudden accession of hope, of which youth always has a bounteous supply tinging all their anticipations with *couleur de rose*, she added:

"O, well, it will only be for a few weeks, and then we can have just as good times as ever."

Alice made no reply, as she was in the secret, which was not to be revealed until her presence on the boat should tell the tale. As Alice was usually very quiet, and often received Maud's outbursts in silence, it created no surprise on this especial occasion. Her quiet manner was a part of herself.

"O, me's a doin in e tountry. Don oo wis oo was a doin too, Allie?" asked Harry, as he came bounding out, his golden curls floating on the soft June breeze.

"O!" replied Alice, gravely, "it must be very nice in the country."

"Ise doin a fis'in wis papa and a widin ole Bob," said the little fellow, with glowing cheek and sparkling eyes.

The elders now appearing, they soon found themselves being rapidly driven away.

"Why, mamma!" exclaimed Maud, with wondering eyes, "if Allie goes down to the boat with us, how is she going to get home? O I suppose John can take her back in the carriage," she added. This view of the case satisfying her with regard to Alice's safety, she contented herself with giving her a rapturous embrace.

"I guess Allie will find her way," replied Mrs. Morrison, smiling. "We'll see that she doesn't get lost."

When, instead of Alice being sent back in the carriage, she saw her going on board with them, she exclaimed, "O, Allie, you are going with us!" And the delighted child bounded with a hop, skip, and jump through the entire length of the cabin, regardless of the jostling crowd of passengers, who were making their way, some of whom were watching her antics with looks of most marked disapprobation, and others with much amusement. At last the stream of passengers has ceased flowing, the confusion attending the embarkation of freight and the shouting of the hands on deck has stopped. The

passengers are nearly all disposed of, with the exception of a few frisky young girls, who are bent upon making themselves conspicuous, and one or two fussy old ladies and gentlemen, who cannot decide as to the best possible arrangement of the numerous boxes, bundles, umbrellas, and canes with which they persisted in encumbering themselves. The whistle is sending out unearthly sounds, the steam-pipe is belching forth its volumes of surplus steam, the wheels begin slowly to revolve, and a medley of voices succeeds the more boisterous sounds. Hurrah! they are all off, and the little ones are so much engaged in watching the foamy track which the steamer leaves in its wake, and the gleam of the phosphorescent water, that they forget that they are tired, or that such a thing as sleep has ever visited their eyelids. Presently the setting sun shed a flood of glory over the broad bosom of the river, and then slowly sank behind the western horizon. Soon, one by one, the pale stars shone through the pure ambient air, and "Night, sable goddess, drew her silken curtain down and pinned it with a star."

Upon Alice's liquid eyes and pale features are still visible the traces of recent weeping, caused by the parting with her idolized father, and into the eyes of the other two the old "sand-woman" has been dusting the contents of her satchel. The work was soon accomplished, and three pairs of eyes were soon tightly closed, and three little forms were in the close

embrace of the drowsy god. The regular motion of the wheels, the splash of the water, even the frequent and by no means gentle pulling of the bells, were wholly unheeded by the unconscious sleepers. With the first dawn of the morning light, however, six eyes were widely opened, and six little feet were on the alert, and, with a childish desire for novelty, all were eager to exchange the boat for the cars which would convey them to a point within three miles of Grandma Rodman's house.

As they ascended the platform in front of the depot, among the motley groups assembled there, Maud soon discovered Lou Wentworth, with her mother, evidently waiting for the same train which was the object of their expectation. Going up to her mother, Maud said, in a low tone,

"There is Lou. Please, don't let Allie see her; it will spoil all her pleasure."

The next moment, however, Lou came running toward her, exclaiming,

"You here, Maud Morrison! And as I live, if there isn't that girl! Well, you must like low associates better than I do."

Then, without waiting for the indignant reply which Maud's flashing eye and flushed cheek showed that she was ready to make, she asked,

"Where are you going?"

"To Grandma Rodman's, near Oswego," answered Maud, quietly.

"Well, good-bye."

And with an affected little giggle, and a wave of the hand, she rejoined her mother.

"Who was that you were talking to?" asked Mrs. Wentworth.

"O, Maud Morrison, and that girl she makes such a fuss over is with her! I'm so sorry I saw them! Do you know, Maud says they are going to her Grandma Rodman's, near Oswego, just where we are going, and I shall be mortified to death! The Rodmans are so rich, and have so many men to work on their farm; and then they have carriages and horses and every thing nice. Aunt Polly lives in such a mean little house, and does all her own work. She looks just like some servant. I wish I'd stayed home. I shall be all the time meeting her and that pale-faced Hamilton girl. They'll be sure to know where I'm staying, and that that coarse-looking woman is my aunt."

"Well, you must try to keep out of their way."

"Keep out of their way! How am I going to do that?" asked Lou, sharply.

"I almost wish we hadn't come," answered her mother, thoughtfully; "but I haven't seen my sister in such a long time, and she was so anxious to see me, I thought, for once, I'd gratify her. This pleasing other people aint much in my line, and I don't know as it pays."

No, Mrs. Wentworth, probably it does not pay in

the bulky dross of earth's equivalents, but in the pure, unalloyed gold of the bank of heaven the payments are made in rich and generous installments. The great Cashier never doles out pittance to those whose investments he holds, but pays liberally and with a princely percentage. He who has said, "The liberal soul shall be made fat," acts upon his own principles. To those who are munificent in sowing broadcast kind deeds, gentle words, and bright smiles, which cost the donor nothing, he gives in return an abundant harvest of love and kindness.

Both mother and daughter relapsed into silence for a moment, when Mrs. Wentworth asked,

"Did you tell them where we are going?"

"No, indeed," replied Lou; "I know too much for that."

Lou answered correctly. She did know too much. Having been disciplined in the school of worldly wisdom, she bore much fruit, not, we are sorry to say, to the glory of God, but to the credit of the school in which she received her instruction.

In a few moments the giant iron monster came thundering along, from his immense throat issuing short snorts and grunts, as though he were trying to divest himself of some encumbrance which was causing him disquietude. He drew himself up with a majestic sweep around a curve in the road, and then took up this mass of freight, which consisted of both insentient matter and of scores of living, bounding

hearts. Gathering fresh force, he started again on his headlong course, dashing and crashing along as though he were inspired by a power not of earth.

Lou and her mother had taken care to secure seats in a car as far as possible from the one into which they saw the Morrisons enter.

As soon as they were seated out of sight and sound of the obnoxious party, Mrs. Wentworth said, in a dreamy tone,

"It cannot be possible that that girl who was with Maud Morrison is the one you say is a pauper. She looks like every thing else. Why, any one can see that she belongs to respectable people. I am not sure but I made a mistake in forbidding you to associate with her. She may turn out to be some grand lady yet, whose acquaintance we may be very glad to cultivate."

Prophetic words! Spoken by the tongue of one unskilled in the language of prophecy, whose words referred to the place and station desired by the devotees of this world, but which were to be fulfilled in another and quite an opposite sense.

"Not she," said this most obedient of daughters in reply to the last remark.

"You told me not to associate with her, and I don't wish to do it. Maud don't take any notice of me, and if she likes a girl who lives in a tenement house better than one who lives in a brown stone one, let her have her; I don't care."

Lou made here two assertions in one sentence, neither of which was true. Her reference to Alice's residence being in a tenement house would lead her listener to associate her with that which is commonly known as a house occupied by almost numberless families, generally in filth and squalor. This was not the case. The Hamilton family were occupants of a floor in a house which contained two other families, it is true, but they were by no means of the class who usually live in tenement houses, properly so called.

Then her boast that she did not care was still more untruthful. She had been, from the first, envious of Maud's very evident preference for Alice, and from this very feeling sprung her bitter animosity toward its innocent cause. This trait, like all others of a sinful nature, was generated in the human heart by the fall of our first parents, and holds its sway with more or less power over every child of Adam. It is one which bears in its train an endless throng of evils. It poisons the fount of affection. It breeds suspicions of our best friends. It makes the heart a seething caldron of unholy and unjust thoughts of those who may be utterly and entirely innocent of any attempt to rob us of the affection of those whom we love. It were well for each one of us to use our utmost endeavors to rid our hearts of this destroyer of our own peace ; this mean, contemptible traducer of the aims and motives of others.

Mrs. Wentworth listened to Lou's peevish outburst, and then, with her usual weak acquiescence with her wishes, replied,

"Very well, just as you please, only don't let her see you at Aunt Polly's."

"I don't see how I'm going to help that," was the amiable reply. "I can't shut myself up in the house all the time. Of course she'll see me."

As they were whirled rapidly on, mile after mile, Harry's glistening eyes looked out in silent wonder; then turning to his mother, with a puzzled expression on his childish features, he asked,

"Ot makes de houses an de tees move so fast? Me tant hardly tee 'em."

His mother explained to him that the houses and trees were stationary, but that the rapid motion of the cars made them appear to be moving. This explanation, though but partially understood, served to quiet the active mind of the child, and he gazed on silently until the heavy eyelids closed and the weary little head rested upon the sweetest of all resting-places—a Christian mother's loving bosom.

The second stage of their journey having been safely accomplished, when they reached the station at Oswego, they found Uncle Ben, with his span of sleek bay horses and a large open wagon, waiting for them.

Uncle Ben was a hearty, cheery bachelor, of about thirty-five, and a splendid specimen of a New York

farmer. Tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular, he looked as though he might carry the whole party in his arms. His wavy chestnut hair was pushed carelessly back from a brow which was unusually white for one so much exposed to the action of the sun and air, and which showed that brains were not wanting in his head. From his laughing blue eyes shot out gleams of welcome, while his mouth, sweet and gentle as a woman's, parted with sunny, good-humored smiles as he greeted the merry group of travelers.

"Hallo, little man!" he exclaimed, catching Harry in his arms and tossing him into the wagon as though he had been a feather; "they tell me that you are Uncle Ben all over again. I prophesy that we shall be fast friends. Don't remember Uncle Ben, do you, old fellow?"

"No-o," shouted the little fellow, raising his great eyes to his uncle's face; "but I ike oo, oos eal nice."

"Think so, do you? Ha, ha," laughed Uncle Ben.

Harry's long lashes shaded a pair of eyes, the iris and pupil of which were almost of one color, the deep purplish tint, and apparently the same texture of the lovely, velvety pansy. He had a trick of raising these marvelous eyes in a manner which was irresistibly bewitching.

Uncle Ben was a victim at once, and instantly

succumbed to the sweet, childish fascinations of his little nephew. Turning to Mrs. Morrison, he said,

“That fellow will break some hearts one of these days with those eyes of his.”

“I hope not,” answered his sister, smiling; “hearts are dangerous things to tamper with.”

“Don’t stay broken; easily mended,” he replied, laconically.

“By the way, Ben, where is the future mistress of Rodman’s Farm?” asked Mr. Morrison, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

“Don’t know, Ned; haven’t found her yet. Think she must be in cloud-land—a myth, you know; one of those airy creatures that always escape our grasp.”

“I don’t believe that, Ben. Shouldn’t wonder if, at this very moment, somewhere in the region of the heart, is a warm spot for some rosy-cheeked, cherry-lipped damsel. I must ask mother about it. She’ll tell us, if you will not.”

“Do you think I would not tell my sister, the dearest sister in all the world?” asked Uncle Ben, with an affectionate look at Mrs. Morrison.

“Not a doubt of it, Ben, not a doubt of it. Do not think I could ever call in question your affection for Annie. I only thought you might be bashful about it,” answered Mr. Morrison, with a merry laugh.

“Don’t be troubled about me on that score. Bashfulness is a commodity I never was very much troubled with,” was the smiling reply.

"Mother is well, you said, Ben?" asked Mrs. Morrison, with kindling eye.

"Yes," he replied, "very well, and time deals very gently with her; but I sometimes see, or think I see, that old age with all its infirmities is slowly creeping upon her. She is the same dear, good mother, and I sometimes look at her with eyes blinded by tears when I remember that the time is coming when I must part with her."

"Surely, Ben," said Mrs. Morrison, with some anxiety, "you do not see any evidence of ill health or decay!"

"No," he answered, cheerily, "O no, and I ought not to have saddened you with such thoughts. I don't know how I came to get upon such a strain. She is well and as happy as ever; but, you know, a bachelor like me has not much else to think about, and I believe my mother is my idol."

"Seriously, Ben," said Mr. Morrison, "I think you ought to marry and create new ties for yourself. Besides, your wife would be company for mother, and might assist her in many ways; and the presence of a bright, cheery young woman about the house would rejuvenate you both."

"No, no, Ned; my mother and I are too dear to each other to admit of any other ties. We are sufficient for each other."

Ben spoke truly. It was no lukewarm affection which existed between the young man in the strength

and vigor of his manhood and the mother in the beauty and mellowness of life's autumn days. "He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." This simple and beautiful expression of the Holy Scripture gave the key-note to the metre whose rhythm flowed so harmoniously through all their lives. Since his father's death, which occurred when Ben was in his sixteenth year, he had been her consolation and her joy.

Alice had been dreading her first encounter with so many people, but Uncle Ben completely won her confidence by his genial, cordial manner, and before they reached the farm-house her timidity was considerably relieved; her first favorable impressions of him were much increased as she listened to his affectionate words of his mother, and she began to think that Mrs. Morrison's brother might possibly be nearly as nice as she was.

They were soon all bundled into the wagon, and the fat, shining horses were peacefully ambling along the smooth road. Already the sun was casting long, slant shadows, and the peculiar sunset glow was resting upon the face of nature, giving the foliage a richer tint and bringing out the graceful, lordly trees against their azure and golden background. Overhead masses of white, fleecy clouds—those lovely clouds which only June skies ever show—were scudding along, now becoming mingled with a most exquisite dove color, while far away toward the western horizon the

sky was aflame with glory. Huge piles of purplish clouds lay banked up against the blazing sky, while amber, crimson, and gold followed each other in swift succession.

Alice had been watching this glowing picture in silence with dilated eyes and bated breath. She gazed with a far-away look in the wistful eyes, as though she were looking through and beyond this earthly glory into the beauty and radiance of the heavenly land.

The vision was dispelled when Uncle Ben, turning to her, said,

“Isn’t that a picture for an artist?”

“Yes,” she answered, timidly; “but I don’t think any artist could ever paint that.”

Alice did not say so, but she was thinking of her father’s words, “There is light ahead,” and she was wondering, in her childish mind, whether the light was beyond that glowing sunset. A huge ball of fire was all that the dazzled eye could now see, and as Uncle Ben drew his horses up before Rodman’s farmhouse it dropped behind the western hills.





CHAPTER VI.

MRS. DUNBAR, at thirty, found herself a childless widow. Possessed, as we have seen, of an ample fortune, with no necessity for exertion or forethought, she lived that aimless, purposeless sort of life which is always so unsatisfactory to the human heart. We are all so constituted, by our divine Creator, that we crave some object of affection, some being upon whom we may bestow our love and care, and from whom, in return, we have a right to expect some response, a mutual interchange of loving and thoughtful interest. No one can live for himself alone. Let him but try the experiment, and straightway he becomes the most miserable of mortals. Life is worth nothing to its possessor without something to live for, some purpose to be attained, something which will call forth the exercise of self-denial, which, if in a worthy cause, is one of the noblest traits with which God has endowed humanity. The acts by which we sacrifice our own personal comfort or pleasure, ay, even those in which we jeopardize our own worldly benefit for the good of others, enlarge the heart, and open a perennial fountain of joy and peace.

Accustomed from her earliest childhood to all those luxuries with which wealth and refinement surround

themselves, Mrs. Dunbar had but slight appreciation of the struggles and privations which poverty entails upon its victims. The only child of fashionable, worldly parents, she had been educated only for this world. To shine in society, to amuse the passing hours, to crowd so much so-called enjoyment into the smallest possible space of time ; and, lastly, but by no means least in her calculations, to make a brilliant marriage, constituted, she had been taught, the sole aim and object of a woman's life. What a sad, fatal mistake ! No thought of eternity ; no acknowledgment of the claims of a crucified Saviour ; no hope of a glorious future ; but the living butterfly-existence, culling the sweetness out of life, with no preparation for the day when sorrow and trial will come, as come they must, to every son and daughter of our fallen race.

Her pathway had been not through the narrow, thorny walks of want and penury, but through the perfumed garden bowers of ease and luxury. She has known and loved Isabel Warner in their school-girl days ; but marriage, as it so often does, had separated the friends, and they had lost all trace of each other until, as we have seen, they were so strangely reunited.

Spending a summer at Saratoga, Mabel Winthrop met Mr. Dunbar, then a wealthy widower twice her age. With the strange perversity of taste which young girls so often manifest while in the spring-time of life, she linked her fate with one who was nearing its

drear and bleak wintry day. A trip to Europe and a continental tour followed, and, after a few years of married life, her husband suddenly died and left her heiress to his immense wealth. Like all her sisters and brothers of the human race, a restless longing possessed her for something still unattained. Like the Athenians, who erected an altar "to the Unknown God," her unsatisfied spirit was constantly wishing for something which as constantly eluded her grasp. She had never drank of that fountain whereof, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again. She had never eaten of the Bread of Life, which feeds and nourishes the immortal soul, and, therefore, she was hungry and thirsty, in utter ignorance of that which alone can satisfy and bless and save.

She hastened to meet her friend, Mrs. Hamilton, and as she learned the wonderful changes through which she had passed, and read the calm peace and trust which sat enthroned upon her pure, intellectual brow, she could not fail to discover what power it was which could produce such a cheerful hope in the midst of adversity and sorrow. Although so intimately associated as they had been in their early days, she had always been unable to fathom the spiritual depths of Isabel Warner's character.

Now the association was renewed, and she saw Isabel Hamilton stripped of all the appliances to worldly comfort and pleasure to which she had been accustomed, surrounded by evidences of poverty and desti-

tution, with a husband, who, next to her God, occupied the largest and tenderest place in her affections, drawing near to the gates of the grave, and yet manifesting a sweet, trusting spirit, which recognized a Father's hand, and enabled her to say, with an exalted faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

It was a lovely morning, about a week after Alice's departure, that Mrs. Dunbar, quite unexpectedly, made her appearance at Mrs. Hamilton's, her face wreathed with smiles, the exponent of a heart more at rest than it had been for a long, long time. Isabel and her family presented to her view a new phase of life, one of genteel, even aristocratic, poverty. Her knowledge of its dark side, as has been shown, was extremely limited. Her sole acquaintance with the class who are most familiar with it was drawn from the miserable, squalid, pinched-looking beggars whom she had seen at her own door, or whom she had encountered abroad.

If she had troubled her brain to think at all, probably she would have arrived at the same conclusion with which so many strive to ease their consciences. "O well," they think, "after all, these people do not feel as we would if placed in such circumstances. They have never been accustomed to any thing better. They are totally unacquainted with the refinements of life, and probably would not know how to make use of them if they were placed within their reach. No doubt they are very well content in their

own sphere of life so long as they are not actually suffering." This may be true of the large majority of cases, but is by no means universally so.

One of Mrs. Dunbar's generous impulses had seized her this morning, and the bright thought flashed across her mind that she had within her power the means of placing within reach of her friend many comforts and delicacies of which she was now deprived. She thought over this matter longer and more earnestly than was her habit to think upon any subject more serious than the style of a new dress or bonnet. The result of her cogitations may be summed up in a few words. She was alone, with no one to share, or with whom she felt disposed to share, the good things which had fallen so liberally to her lot. It was with these feelings still fresh and glowing that she greeted Mrs. Hamilton with an affectionate kiss, saying, playfully,

"Come, Isabel, I have my carriage at the door. Put on your bonnet and come out for an airing. It is a charming morning, and the fresh breezes will put a little color into these pale cheeks."

"Thank you," she replied; "you are very kind to think of me, but I cannot leave my sick husband, who requires all my care."

"Cannot Mabel stay with him for an hour?" asked Mrs. Dunbar, with a slight shade of disappointment in her tone.

"Yes, she can," was the quiet reply, "but he shall

never miss my presence while he can recognize and be comforted by it."

While the denial of self was not one of the most conspicuous points in Mrs. Dunbar's character, yet its manifestation in one whom she already considered as but little lower than the angels, added fresh luster and brilliancy to that which her eyes, blinded by the "god of this world," was too dim to see clearly.

"How is Mr. Hamilton?" she asked, kindly.

"Much the same; but I feel that he cannot be with us long, and I am resolved that no hand but mine shall minister to his necessities while there is the faintest pulsation in that heart which has always beat so warmly for me. He has been a kind and faithful husband, and I can never do too much for him."

Mrs. Dunbar had been regarding her with a fixed look of wonder and perplexity in her eyes, then, with a faint sigh, she said,

"Well, Isabel, to tell you the truth, this intense love, this unselfish devotion to your husband is something which has never entered into my experience. I begin to think I must have led a sadly selfish, useless life. You know I was young when I married, and my husband was much older than I."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Hamilton, "the old story of May and December trying in vain to assimilate. I believe it to be just as impossible for the old and the young to become congenial companions for a life-

time as for the balmy breezes of a May morning to meet and mingle with the nipping frosts of a December night."

"You are right," was the thoughtful reply, "but I was dazzled by his wealth, and by the foolish notion of being an old man's darling. I was not as happy a wife as you have been; it may have been partly my own fault. I know I was not to him what you are to Mr. Hamilton. I was gay and giddy, and, I am afraid, did not try to suit his tastes."

"Such a tale is too common to admit of any doubt of the truth of your statement, even were I disposed to believe that you blame yourself too severely."

"Yes, and I have not the pleasant memories that you will have."

Mrs. Hamilton was silent a moment, and then answered,

"Probably not. My husband will leave to me and to his children a precious inheritance in his Christian life and his many acts of love and kindness. His memory will be fragrant through all our lives."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Parker, when Mrs. Dunbar took her leave. A bright smile of welcome lit up the face of the invalid as his friend and pastor entered the room.

"Good-morning, my brother," said the latter, with a warm shake of the hand; "is the lookout pleasant this morning?"

“Yes,” replied Mr. Hamilton, “there is a bright, fair prospect.”

“My dear friend,” said the minister, “you are to be envied. A situation like yours is certainly more desirable than that of a man in the heyday of earthly honors and emoluments.”

“Yes, I would not exchange places with the mightiest monarch on his throne. The glory of his kingdom must pass away, but the one I am to inherit will last forever.”

“It is a grand and glorious thing,” was the reply, “to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

“Yes, it is glorious ; and one of its crowning glories is that it is within reach of all, even the poorest, and that the terms upon which it is offered may be accepted by all.”

“Yes, and when we remember that these terms are so exceedingly simple—only to believe and obey—is it not strange that such multitudes refuse to accept them ?”

“Passing strange,” answered Mr. Hamilton ; “but, you know, the prince of the power of the air is constantly on the alert, poisoning the moral atmosphere, and bringing strong counteracting influences ; and, you know, even better than I, the weakness and worldliness of the human heart.”

“Yes,” replied Dr. Parker, “I have constant and

most sad experiences of them. The voice of Jesus calls in vain. His soft, sweet tones are lost amid the din and clatter of worldly occupations and amusements."

"Still," said Mrs. Hamilton, "it has always seemed a mystery to me that the claims of the Gospel remain so long unheeded even by many who are scrupulously attentive to its outward observances."

"It is a mystery, my dear lady, until we remember that this is the stronghold behind which they intrench themselves. They have the form of godliness, but deny its power."

"Yes," she replied, "I have heard that argument used. They say they obey all God's requirements, and that is all that is necessary. Therefore they have no need of the Saviour. So, of course, for them Christ died in vain."

"Exactly so," answered Dr. Parker. "They forget or ignore the groundwork of our religion, the faith by which alone we are saved. And many wrest the word of God to their destruction. Misunderstanding, either willfully or blindly, the words of St. James, when he says that 'faith without works is dead,' they believe, or try to believe, that the good works upon which they so much plume themselves will be a sufficient passport to the favor of God, and finally to a place in those mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for those who love him."

"This is one of the delusions of the Evil One, I

suppose," said Mrs. Hamilton. "How fruitful he is in resources to ruin the souls of men."

"Yes," was the reply of this faithful worker for God. "And it is frightful to think how the number of those who hold such views is increasing. Yet we have great cause for rejoicing that the Gospel proves in such multitudes of cases a 'savor of life unto life,' and that its strength-giving power permeates so many hearts."

"I have been thinking," said Mr. Hamilton, "since I have been lying here so helpless, how strange it is that Christians are not more zealous in working for God. My wife has been reading to me some extracts from the life and labors of Whitefield, the great evangelist, and when I compare such a life of ceaseless activity for the glory of God, even when suffering from physical disability, with my own past life of indolent ease, I feel what an unfaithful servant I have been."

"I fear we may all feel that," was the reply, given in a thoughtful tone. "Few men have ever accomplished as much for Christ and for the souls of men as he. His crown must be sparkling with many jewels, the seals of his ministry."

"It seems to me," rejoined the invalid, with moistened eyes, "that if I were in health again I would give myself up to the work of an evangelist, and implore all who came within my reach, in Christ's stead, and for his sake, to be reconciled to God. Now it is

too late," he added, somewhat mournfully. "My time for usefulness is past."

"Not so, my brother," answered his pastor; "that is where you mistake. You are preaching volumes of sermons. The servant of God may honor his Master as much by waiting and watching, by patient endurance of pain and suffering, as by more active service. Indeed, I think his service is the more difficult of the two, and, therefore, I believe his reward will be proportionate. You, my dear brother, recommend the religion of Jesus quite as much by your cheerful patience under your prolonged and painful ailment, as you would if, in stentorian tones, you could proclaim his unsearchable riches. There is many a man who could endure herculean labors for God, who would chafe and fret under his afflictive hand."

"I thank you for your kind and cheering words, my dear friend; but even in the dim twilight of eternity, before its glorious day-dawn breaks upon us, our views of things differ materially from those which we hold in the darkness of this world. Things which, when in the full vigor of health and strength, enveloped in the gross folds of earthly pleasure or profit, seemed to me of comparatively small importance, have now enlarged their proportions and stand out with a distinctness which I would once have deemed impossible."

"Yes," was the thoughtful reply. "The near prospect of death and eternity is a powerful magnifier.

Its strong lenses are brought to bear upon the soul with tremendous force. How blessed are those who at such a time feel the positive assurance of hearing the Saviour's welcome plaudit: 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'"

"The silence of night gives one ample opportunity for retrospective thought," was the smiling answer.

"Are your nights restful?" asked the clergyman, gently.

"Restful in one sense. My bodily pain necessitates a frequent change of posture, but my mind is sweetly restful. Do not imagine," he added, brightening up, "that any remembrance of my past negligence ever brings a cloud between my Saviour and my own soul. O, no; he has assured me of his entire forgiveness, and I joyfully rest upon his precious promises."

With a hearty assurance of a frequent repetition of his visit the minister took leave. As he pursued his walk his mind became engrossed in the contemplation of the source of his friend's unruffled composure and blissful anticipation of a future which, in all human probability, would soon become merged in a present of unspeakable joy.

He became so absorbed in thought that his feelings found audible expression, even in the crowded mart through which his course lay.

"Happy man!" he exclaimed. "He has reached the summit of a glorious Nebo, from whence, like

Moses, he can view the promised land, happily without, like him, being debarred an entrance upon and enjoyment of its entrancing loveliness. He

“ ‘Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way,—
And all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past.’ ”

Pursuing this train of thought, he walked rapidly on, utterly unconscious of the flight of time or of the distance which he had traveled, until he found himself in a lonely locality almost on the outskirts of the city. Arousing himself to the strangeness of his surroundings, he became aware that night was fast closing in. The blue dome above his head was clear and cloudless, and already glittering with the moon's silver crescent and its attendant train. The roar of the city had changed to an indistinct hum, while turmoil and confusion seemed to him almost like things of a past age. Already the city lamps were lighted, and as he retraced his steps he awoke to the consciousness of the complete absorption which had held him enthralled for so long.

Walking rapidly cityward for a few blocks, he soon came within hailing distance of an omnibus, and taking a seat therein, was soon in the midst of the busy throngs. The glow of the gas-lights and the hurrying crowds soon brought him back to the realization of the fact that he was still an inhabitant of this sublunary sphere. The gay groups that were, with such eager faces, crowding the several places of

amusement, seemed to him of more importance than ever before, as he pictured to himself the possible future of each, and resolved to be more faithful than ever in the work of the ministry.

On reaching home he found his wife waiting with a smiling welcome. Linking her arm in his, and drawing him into the library, with an air of mystery and a pleasant little flutter of excitement in her manner, she asked: "My dear, where have you been so long? We have been waiting dinner for you this long time."

Then drawing his head down to a level with her mouth, she whispered:

"There is a couple in the parlor waiting for you to marry them."

"Is that so?" he said, wearily. "I'm rather sorry for it."

"Sorry!" she exclaimed, gleefully, "I'm not sorry, because you know I always have the fees, and I want ever so much money to-morrow."

"Not a doubt of it," was the reply, with a quiet smile, "but I suppose I must make myself presentable to metamorphose those two eagerly expectant individuals into one. By the way, do you know who they are?"

"Not I," she chirruped out in her bird-like tone; "I never saw them before. Thomas ushered them into the parlor, and as the parson was out, I, as in duty bound, you know, my dear, as the parson's

wife, went in to offer an apology for his absence, and invite them to remain until he came in."

"No thought of the fee, of course, eh, Susie?"

"Not a thought," she answered, with a mischievous smile. "All pure duty to my husband and his guests; not a speck of woman's curiosity either," she added, quickly.

"Well, I'm ready," he said, absently; "but you and Millie, and one of the servants, must be present as witnesses. But, Susie," he said, detaining her as she was leaving the room to summon her co-witnesses, "If I were you I wouldn't be too sure about the fee. They may not answer my questions satisfactorily."

She made a rueful face, but instantly noted his grave look.

"O," asked she, breathlessly, "aren't you going to have your dinner first?"

"No, indeed," he answered. "Do you think I would keep two young hearts uneasily palpitating one moment longer than is necessary?"

"Ah!" was the reply, with an arch glance up into the thoughtful face, "you have not forgotten your own youthful folly, have you, dear?"

"No folly at all," he answered, smiling gravely, "but sound, sterling sense, as my subsequent happy experience has most abundantly proved. But come, dear, we are keeping these strangers waiting."

With a grateful glance and a suspicious look of humidity about the merry eyes, she was about to

reply, when her sister and the neat servant, whose presence was required, entered the room.

Mrs. Parker watched her husband narrowly, as he offered to the strangers a courteous greeting and an apology for the unavoidable detention. With the innate tact and the good breeding which characterized Dr. Parker, he had so adroitly and skillfully concealed his surprise that not a trace of it was visible, either in his unruffled countenance, or in the dignified suavity of his manner. Surprised he was, for instead of meeting, as he expected, a youthful couple all bathed in blushes and tremulous with the sweet confusion which usually accompanies a bride and groom to the hymeneal altar, his gaze now rested upon a man whose appearance gave unmistakable evidence that he had reached the zenith of life's fair day, but that old Father Time had dealt gently with him. His rotund proportions and rubicund visage bore witness to unbroken health. Through the thick clustering locks were traceable occasional threads of silver, which lent an added dignity to his really fine and prepossessing countenance, while his genial smile revealed a fine set of natural teeth, making altogether a not unpleasing picture of manhood's prime.

By his side sat a woman who must have been his senior by at least fifteen years. A wiry, nervous-looking figure, whose keen, restless black eyes took a rapid inventory of every object which came within her range of vision. The shrunken cheeks and the

shriveled, sallow skin presented a marked contrast to the ruddy glow which flushed both cheeks and brow of her portly companion. The thin, crisp gray hair was clustered into the short spiral curls of a quarter of a century ago. The forehead was indented with deep lines, while about the set lips was a hard, stern look, and the whole physiognomy was a settled expression of discontent, as though life were not at all to her liking, and she and it had been waging a hard battle, in which who would be victor still remained a doubtful point.

Her dress, of some silky looking gray material, was made after the fashion of a by-gone time, while a bonnet of huge proportions, but similar in color and texture, surmounted the diminutive form. A quantity of rich jewelry of rare workmanship, but of antique design, reminding one of a walking advertisement of some ambitious dealer in trinkets and bijouterie, adorned her person. A sort of elfish motion of the corners of the thin lips and scanty eyebrows, together with the quick interlacing of the bony fingers, all proclaimed the tension of the tissue of nerves which seem to constitute the entire organization.

After the necessary formula, this anomalous couple took their places and, in the presence of the witnesses there assembled, entered into the marriage covenant, sealing before the Most High the solemn vows which he alone could enable them to perform.

Notwithstanding the grotesque appearance of the

mature bride, which at any other time would have provoked his ever-ready risibles, Dr. Parker's heart was so deeply imbued with the impressions which he had that day received, that from his manner of rendering it, the service seemed to have acquired a new solemnity, and his concluding prayer was couched in such melting language that no thought of burlesque or frivolity found lodgment in the heart of either of those who, with bowed heads, listened, in silent awe, to his beseeching tones. After dismissing the newly made husband and wife, with a fervent benediction, he turned to his wife, saying, with a smile, "Here, Susie, here is your fee; after all, I hope you will enjoy spending it, dear."

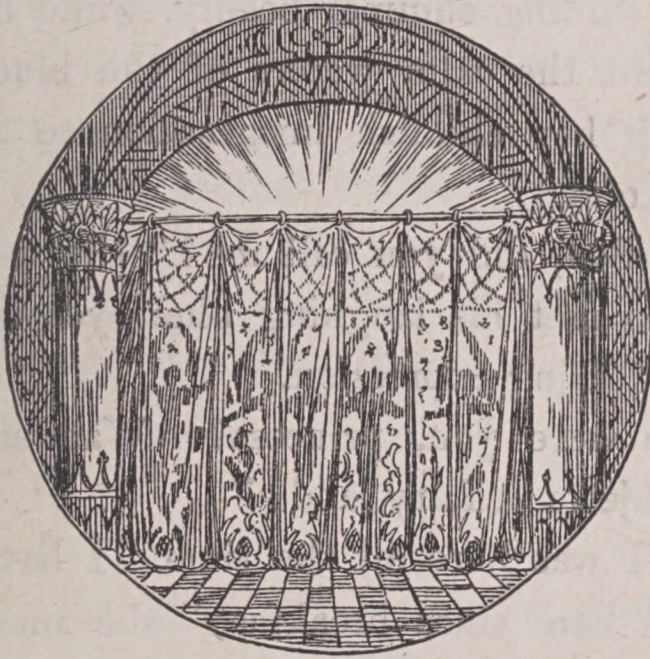
With a triumphant exclamation she opened the tiny roll which her husband had placed in her hand, and with a look of most comic distress upon her rosy face, she displayed a one dollar bill.

"Ha! ha!" she laughed; "no shopkeeper shall contaminate that with his avaricious fingers. I will preserve it as a pleasant reminder of an act of unparalleled generosity."

Passing her hand fondly over his brow, she said, sweetly, "What makes you so sober to-night, dear; are you ill?"

"Not sober," he replied, returning the caress, "only thoughtful. No, dearest, I am not at all ill; but, Susie, I have received an impression to-day which I think and trust I shall never lose. I have

been conversing with a saint, who is just on the verge of the land of Beulah. His face, it seems to me, is radiant with the light from the throne of God. His lamp is trimmed and burning, and he only waits for the Bridegroom's voice, to follow him in to the marriage supper of the Lamb."





CHAPTER VII.

“A LICE, come down here, fairy!”

Uncle Ben's cheery tones aroused the thoughtful child, as she stood by a low window, lost in admiration of the scene which lay before her. Acre after acre of well-cultivated farm land presented a picture of smiling summer beauty, while but a few miles distant the calm waters of the blue Ontario stretched in her childish imagination to an almost limitless extent.

“Uncle Ben, did you call me?” she asked, and, turning, she met his laughing blue eyes fixed upon her with a teasing expression.

“Where were you, princess? Wandering away to your subjects in fairy land?”

“Why, I was here all the time. I haven't been away from here since breakfast,” she answered, innocently, fixing her great wondering eyes upon his face.

“Seems to me you are very matter-of-fact for a fairy princess, or else you are trying to deny your relationship.”

“Deny my relationship! I don't know what you mean, Uncle Ben,” she replied, in a puzzled tone.

Notwithstanding the good fellowship which existed between Uncle Ben and Alice, she was sometimes a little uncertain of his meaning, when, as was the case this morning, he happened to be in one of his teasing moods.

"Why," he said, laughing, "you are trying to make me believe that you are not a fairy, and I do *not* believe that any thing so ethereal can belong to this earth. Do you know, I half expect to see you vanish out of my sight, even while I am talking to you!"

"What are you talking about, Ben?" asked his mother, approaching the spot where they stood. "Who is going to vanish? Not Allie, surely?"

"I don't know, mother, doesn't she look as though a pair of wings would suit her?" he asked, stroking her long hair with a caressing gesture. "See these pale cheeks and this airy little figure. Are they not suited to angelhood?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the old lady, cheerily. "These pale cheeks are going to get bronzed and sunburned, and this little figure is going to gain more flesh and muscle. Why, Ben, we shall send her home as brown as a berry and as plump as Maudie."

"All right! But," he continued, abruptly changing his tone, "come, Allie, I'm going to Oswego this morning. Don't you and the other youngsters want to go along for a ride?"

"Go where?" asked Maud, as she came bounding in. "Of course we want to go."

"Of course you do, dumpling; you're always ready for any thing that promises fun," answered Uncle Ben, with an amused look. "Isn't that so, Maudie?"

"I s'pose so," she answered. "I guess you like fun pretty well, too, Uncle Ben."

Uncle Ben's countenance assumed a serious expression, and, turning toward the quiet little figure ensconced in one corner of the broad window-seat, he asked, "What were you thinking of, Allie, when I called you? You seemed to be lost in thought."

She hesitated a moment, and then answered, shyly, while a burning blush overspread neck and face, mounting even to the roots of her hair,

"I was thinking whether heaven is any thing like this. O, Uncle Ben, I never saw any thing so lovely! Do you think heaven can be any more beautiful than this?"

"Why, yes, Allie," he replied, wondering at the direction in which the child's thoughts generally drifted, "I kinder think heaven must be a mighty sight finer than this place."

To a child of Alice's very unchild-like appreciation of scenic beauty, accustomed only to the high brick walls and paved streets of a city, the wide expanse of open country, the sense of freedom, and the sweet freshness of the dewy morning, were a new delight

to her, and although she could not analyze the feeling, there was a sense of God's nearness in the immediate presence of his handiwork, which made her feel that heaven must be in some sense like this place, this being to her the acme of earthly loveliness. While these things only appealed to Maud's more frivolous and sensuous nature as so many sources of pleasure, to Alice they seemed to be so many proofs of God's power and goodness. Her esthetic taste was gratified by the charming views which in all her drives opened before her, as well as by the harmonious blending of colors in the rich foliage, and, above all, by the matchless sunsets which charmed while they saddened her.

Notwithstanding her instinctive dread of encountering strangers, she had fallen, in the short space of one week, quite naturally into her niche in the household. She had received a cordial and affectionate welcome, and seemed to have crept right into the warmest corner of each of the warm hearts beneath that hospitable roof. Grandma Rodman had at once manifested her broad, all-enfolding sympathy, and taken in the fragile little being whom she immediately dubbed Snow-drop, so forcibly was she reminded of the frail and delicate beauty of the early spring flower, so soon passing away to be followed by its more ruddy and blooming sisterhood. Surrounded by a genial atmosphere of love and cheerful kindness, she seemed to expand, as though in

grateful affection toward these new-formed friends. Indeed, she seemed almost as much at home as Maud herself. "Grandma" and "Uncle Ben" fell quite naturally from her lips, while she was fast becoming familiarized with Aunt Mary and Uncle Fred, of whom she found Maud's description to be true, for Aunt Mary, Mrs. Morrison's only sister, was sweet and gentle, and Uncle Fred was jolly and generous.

Just at this stage of the conversation the horses were brought up to the front door, their coats sleek and shining, driven by old Zeke, one of the farm hands.

"Thar, Mister Ben," he said, with a bow, "thar's yer hosses, sir, as fine and well groomed a span as yer'll find in the hull o' this ere Empire State. They aint none o' yer plebian hosses, them aint. Them's the reg'lar aristocracy. High-blooded critters, them is."

"That's so, Zeke," said Uncle Ben, with a sly wink at Mrs. Morrison as she stood in the door, smiling; "that's so and no mistake."

"Did I ever tell yer, Mister Ben, 'bout them thare hosses wot I used ter take care on over to Rome. Lord bless yer," he continued, without waiting for a reply, "the master over there, he used ter think they was wonderful critters; but bless yer, they want nothin' to these. Why, bless yer heart, I talk ter these critters, hold reg'lar conversations with 'em, jist 's if they was human natur. They know jist

what I'm a-sayin' to 'em, an' they nod, an' they larf, an' I 'spect every day they'll talk."

Nothing pleased Uncle Ben more than to get Zeke on one of his strains of "*blowin'*," as he called it, and now, as he watched the expression of mingled wonder and amazement in Alice's eyes, he determined to draw him out."

"What about those horses? Tell us, Zeke," he said, with an amused smile.

"Wal," answered Zeke, well pleased to have an appreciative audience, "them hosses was well 'nough, but they didn't never look like these. Now these is a beautiful, rich chisnut, but them was a kinder yaller like, an' yer might use the curry-comb till yer was tired, an' rub an' rub till yer was fit to drop, an' it didn't seem ter do no good; thar wa'n't never no shine on ter 'em. Wall, one day, the missis, she wanted ter go to see some grand, hifalutin' kind o' people, an' she said, in her kind o' coaxin' way, 'Now, Zeke, git the hosses up reel stylish, wont yer?' I'll do it, ses I, ef it takes all the skin off o' my hands. Wall, the master, he cum eout to the barn, an' he ses, ses he, 'Zeke, we like to please the missis. Git every thing up spick an' span, wont you?' 'All right,' ses I; 'I'll hev 'em a-shinin like glass.' So yu'd better b'lieve I went ter work with a will, an' I cleaned an' cleaned, an' rubbed an' rubbed, tell I couldn't put no more shine onter 'em, an' they looked mighty fine; at least," he said, correcting

himself, as he saw Uncle Ben's quizzical smile, "as fine 's them hosses ever could look. Lor' bless yer, ef these hosses had all the rubbin' them hosses had that day, why they'd dazzle your eyes so yer couldn't look at 'em. Wal, the missis, she wanted me ter go 'long fer coachman, cos she liked ter hav ev'ry thin' mighty stylish, the missis did. Wal, we was drivin' along in fine style, an' I was a flatterin' myself t' I'd got the critters ter lookin' kinder sorter nice, when the fust thing I knowed, Joe, the nigh hoss, he keeled right over, an' fell down dead as a door-nail. Wal, bless yer, we hadn't much more'n got him loosened from the kerridge than Jim, the off hoss, he was, he went and died, too."

"Why, Zeke," asked Maud, with breathless eagerness, "what was the matter with them?"

"Wal, miss, we'd a new bag o' bran that mornin', an' arterwards the master an' me, we hed it all, what do yer call it, kinder looked inter, yer know, the 'pothecary at the village, he—wal, I dunno what you call it.'

"Analyzed," suggested Uncle Ben.

"Yis, yis, that's it. He kinder ana—somethin', I dunno what that big word is, an' he said as how that thar was pizen inter it. But I don't think nothin' o' that kind, cos we hed some pizen for rats, an' I think the critters got some o' that. But 't wan't my fault, yer know, an' I don't hev ter curry on 'em no more."

"Well," asked Uncle Ben, "what did they do about the man who sold the bran? Didn't they prosecute him?"

"I dunno nothin' about what that tarnation long word means. She tried to make a fuss about it, but it was kinder showed up that thar warn't no pizen inter it, an' so they kinder let it drop. Them country doctors, they don't know nothin', an' the master, yer know, he knowed well 'nough that thar was rat pizen there, and so he didn't say no more about it."

"Well, Zeke, don't poison my horses," said Uncle Ben, as he mounted to his seat in the carriage, which was already filled with a crowd of gleeful children.

"Bless yer!" said Zeke, with a deprecating wave of the hand, "I didn't pizen them hosses."

"No, no, Zeke, of course you didn't. If you always take as good care of Cherry and Bess as you do now, they wont suffer."

"I bet you," he answered, with a chuckle, as the shouting crowd drove away.

Uncle Ben took care that Alice should occupy a seat next him, as he loved to watch her quiet but keen enjoyment. They had not proceeded many rods before her quick eyes discerned in the distance a familiar figure, and turning to Maud, she said, in a low tone, "There's Lou."

"So it is!" exclaimed Maud. "Who in the world is that with her?"

The mystery was soon solved, for Uncle Ben, as is

the friendly custom in many parts of the country, stopped, saying, in his hearty manner, "Good-morning, Polly. How are you this morning?"

"Wal," was the reply, given in a discouraged, lackadaisical sort of tone, "I aint nothin' much to brag on, Mister Ben. I'm ein-a-most on my last legs."

As Polly had been on her last legs ever since Ben had known her, and the said legs still answered her purpose very well, the information did not cost him much anxiety; so, chirruping gayly to his horses, he left them plodding on their weary way. The girls had exchanged a nod, for, try as she would, Lou could not render herself invisible, or in any way escape the recognition of the two whom she most dreaded to meet.

"O, Uncle Ben!" almost shouted Maud, as soon as they were out of hearing, "who is that woman?"

"That, dumpling? why, that's Zeke's wife," he answered.

"Zeke's wife!" she screamed. "Why, Alice, that can't be Lou's aunt."

"Shouldn't wonder a bit," Uncle Ben replied, turning round in order to face the two girls. "I know she was expecting her sister; and, quite likely, this girl is her daughter."

"Well, well," said Maud, "if I were Lou I wouldn't put on so many airs with that coarse woman for my aunt."

"O, well, Maudie," said Alice, "she may be very good, you know; and then she ought not to be ashamed of her because she is coarse."

"That is so like you, Allie," answered Maud, impulsively; "you are always looking for the good in people. I don't think every body is good, as you do."

"Then," said Uncle Ben, in an approving tone, "Alice has found out one great secret of happiness, to make the most of that which we cannot change."

"But, Uncle Ben," objected Maud, "do you think every body is good?"

"No, Maudie, I do not. The Bible tells us there is none good but one, that is God. I think, however, that we may discover good *traits* in every one, if we will only set ourselves to look for them."

"Do you think, Uncle Ben," asked Helen Ormsbee, a bright girl of fifteen, "that there are more good people in the world than there are bad ones?"

"Well, Nellie," he answered, reflectively, "that is a pretty hard question to answer. It depends very much upon your idea of goodness. If by good people you mean those who are not positively bad, not guilty of any very decided vice or crime—those who are naturally possessed of kindly feeling, who will do a neighborly act, provided it does not interfere with their own pleasure or profit, then I think the scale would preponderate in their favor. But, if by goodness you mean, not *nominal* Christianity, but Christianity in its legitimate sense—purity of heart and life in God's

sight, an entire consecration of one's self to his service—I am afraid such goodness is comparatively rare.”

“I suppose that is true,” she replied, with a kindling eye, “and yet I know so many people whom I think are just as good as they can be. There's our minister in Boston, and papa, and mamma, and grandma, and Aunt Annie, and Uncle Ned, and you, and—”

Uncle Ben turned away his head, and, waving his hand with a dissenting gesture, said,

“There, there, Nellie, that will do. Don't be too sure. The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it? Don't get the habit of exaggerating. When you think seriously do you imagine that there is any person *as good as he can be?*”

“N-o,” she answered, hesitatingly, “I suppose they *might* be perfect, but I think they are very good.”

“Very good, I grant you. Perfection of which you speak can never be attained in this world. But, Nellie, did you ever think that it is the motive from which we act that renders us acceptable or otherwise in the sight of God? You remember the widow's mite was worth more in Christ's estimation than many much larger gifts, for the simple reason, that the offering was made in the right spirit. There can be no doubt that there are many deeds which, outwardly, appear amiable, or generous, which are performed from some lurking, hidden selfishness of motive of which even the person himself may be scarcely conscious. It is, perhaps, equally certain that multitudes

of great and noble acts proceed from purity of thought and intention. Of course, we cannot see the motive which actuates every one, and so we are bound, in the exercise of that charity which thinketh no evil, to put upon all the best possible construction."

"Yes," she replied, in a triumphant tone, "but 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' So I have the best of the argument, Uncle Ben."

"Perhaps you have," he replied, smiling. "I hope so, Nellie, for the sake of humanity. At least, I am willing to concede to my fellow-beings the meed of goodness which belongs to them. Now, for instance, here is Polly. I believe she is a good woman, that is, I mean in the way in which the word is ordinarily accepted; but she has numberless difficulties and provocations to contend with, and perhaps her development is not as rapid as it might be under more favorable circumstances."

"Where do they live, Uncle Ben?" asked Maud, now, for the first time, becoming interested in the conversation.

"In a little house about a mile from the farm," he answered. "Polly hasn't much to make her very cheery. She has to work very hard, and reaps but little benefit from it. I don't know that we ought to blame her very severely if she *does* grumble and complain sometimes. I shouldn't wonder, if in her place, we'd grumble more, eh, Maudie?"

"I shouldn't wonder," she replied, laughing.

"Uncle Ben, are they very poor?" asked Alice, timidly.

"Poor! well, yes, fairy," answered he. "You know country folks generally have enough to eat and to drink, and they manage somehow to get clothes; but they're very much like the man with the muck-rake, they are digging and delving in the dirt, and don't see the crown which hangs suspended right over their heads ready to be given them, if they will only look up and take it."

"O, yes," she answered, "I read all about that in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Wasn't it nice?"

"Very nice, fairy; but I don't think you'll ever dig in the dirt so busily as to lose your crown."

"O, I hope not," she answered, earnestly. "I'd so much rather have the crown than any thing I could find in the dirt."

"Suppose," suggested Uncle Ben, "it was a diamond ring?"

"Well," she said, with her peculiar expression of childish innocence, "I'd a great deal rather have the crown, because that means a crown in heaven, doesn't it, Uncle Ben?"

"Yes, fairy, you would be right to choose the crown, because it does mean, as you suppose, the crown of life which God has promised to give unto all who are faithful unto death."

When they reached home they found Zeke stretched out at full length waiting to take the horses, look-

ing the very picture of indolent ease and contentment.

"Here we are, Zeke, all right," said Uncle Ben, as he drove slowly through the gate which the factotum, with an unwonted show of alacrity, had opened for him.

"That's good, Mister Ben. O, I knowed as how you'd cum back all right, cos them hosses is well-behaved hosses. They aint a-goin' to cut up no capers."

"We saw Polly on the road plodding along, and tired enough she looked, too."

"Like enough, like enough. That aint nothin' new, yer know. Saw the old woman, did yer? Wal, was she walkin' pretty spry? She said this mornin' she was ein-a-most on her last legs, but she's been on her last legs so many times, Polly has, I don't think nothin' about it."

"That's just it, Zeke," said Uncle Ben, lifting the children one by one from the carriage, whence they scattered in all directions. "I'm afraid you don't think enough about it. I say, old fellow," he continued, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, "Seems to me you might make it a little easier for Polly, if you only would think about it. I know you don't mean to be unkind, Zeke, but you know women, as a rule, are uncomplaining creatures, and men get used to their ailments, and, as you say, think nothing of them, until, before they know it, the light is extinguished, and they are left in darkness."

"Lord bless yer, Mister Ben! you don't think thar's nothin' the matter with Polly, do yer?" asked Zeke, now becoming really alarmed.

"No, but she looked fagged and worn this morn-
ing, and I've been thinking whether, by a little fore-
thought, you might not spare her some fatigue."

"La sakes, Mister Ben, you don't know nothin' about it. She will work an' work, and then she scolds about it, Polly does. She would hev them durned proud Yorkers here, a sister o' hern an' her darter, a durned sassy thing she is, too. I telled her 'twould make her extry work, but, la sakes, it didn't do no good. She wouldn't pay no attention to nothin' I said. But I'll try an' be keerful, Mister Ben, cos I'd be awful cut up to lose Polly. I'd rather a pesky sight lose one o' the young uns, cos she helps me a mighty sight, Polly does."

"Hope I've stirred him up a little bit," thought Uncle Ben, as Zeke slowly and thoughtfully drove the horses off to the stable. "He'd be a poor forlorn creature without Polly, and he ought to do more for her than he does."

Maud rushed into the house to communicate to her mother the wonderful discovery she had made, that the proud Lou Wentworth was a niece of Zeke's wife.

"Just think!" she exclaimed, "after putting on so many airs about Allie. She must have been mortified enough this morning. Doesn't the Bible say

something, mamma, about pride and a haughty spirit? What is it?"

"'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,'" quoted Mrs. Morrison, gently. "But, Maudie, be very careful, my daughter, that you don't rejoice in Lou's mortification. I don't know," she added, "that Lou has any cause to be mortified, except for her unlady-like behavior to Alice. Zeke and his wife are poor, it is true, and have not had many advantages of education, but they are good, honest people, so that she has no reason to blush for the relationship."

"I felt sorry for her this morning," said Alice; not because her aunt was poor, but because I knew she felt ashamed, and didn't want us to see her."

"Never mind, dear, treat her kindly if you meet her, so that she will not think that you have any unkind or revengeful feeling rankling in your heart. You know that is the example our Saviour left us, and he says also, 'Pray for them which despitefully use you.'"

When our party reached home dinner was just ready to be served, and they were in good condition to do full justice to grandma's sweet, tender lamb, fresh vegetables, and delicious apple-pie, with an abundance of good rich cream.

"Grandma," said Helen, "Uncle Ben and I had a theological discussion this morning; didn't we, Uncle Ben?"

"Yes," he answered, "and I'm not sure, mother, but she got the best of me. If Nellie were a boy, I should expect to hear her preach a doctrinal sermon some day."

"She can do better than that," answered grandma, looking fondly at her favorite granddaughter. "She can preach by her daily life the doctrine of faith and good works."

A vivid flush of crimson suffused Helen's face, as she turned toward grandma, saying, in a low voice intended for her ear alone,

"That is what I would like to do, grandma."

The old lady's lips were tremulous for a moment as she answered, in the same low key,

"God bless you, dear, and help you to carry out your wish!"

This by-talk was unnoticed by the others, whose attention was, for the moment, diverted by some of Harry's childish sallies.

Mrs. Ormsbee here changed the conversation by asking,

"How are Zeke and Polly, Ben? Are they doing any better?"

"No," answered Ben. "I've been lecturing Zeke for not taking better care of her, but he says, 'La sakes, 't aint no use; she wont listen to nothin' I say.'"

"I wonder what Gould Brown would say if he could hear Zeke's grammar?" said Mrs. Morrison,

laughing. "That fellow is such an incorrigible specimen of easy-going self-complacency I should think you would get out of patience with him, Ben."

"'Twouldn't be no use; 'twouldn't do no good," answered Ben, with a successful imitation of Zeke's peculiar nasal twang. "Gittin out o' patience wouldn't help it none."





CHAPTER VIII.

IN addition to the ideas of utility, which were shared alike by grandma and Uncle Ben, they also possessed a strong and hearty appreciation of order and beauty. The well-kept lawn, with its velvety green sward, and the blooming garden, with its choice collection of favorites from the floral kingdom, all bore witness to the taste for horticulture, which lends such a charm to country life.

What a pity that we do not more often familiarize ourselves with the countless objects of beauty which God with such a lavish generosity scatters around us. What errors of taste and judgment do multitudes of human beings display in the passion for the artificial, the semblance of that to which no artificer, however perfect his imitations, can impart the peculiar delicacy of texture, of hue, or of odor which is embodied in the very nature of the tiniest, the simplest floweret which was ever kissed by a June zephyr.

The long garden was flanked on one side by magnificent grape-vines of the choicest varieties, now in the full glory of their luxuriant leafage, and the promise of an abundant yield of the luscious purple fruit given by the already well-set clusters. At the extreme end of the garden, and extending across its

entire width, was a small tract of land separated from the orchard beyond by a broad, high hedge of *Arbor Vitæ*. This hedge, which was a protection against cattle, as well as stragglers of the human species, was crowned by a prolific growth of sweet-brier, or brier rose, as some call it, which spread its fragrant tendrils and fair, delicate blossoms in all their clinging loveliness.

As grandma knew that Satan always finds some mischief for idle hands, as well as that little hearts, like older ones, are always happier when the hands are employed, she had given orders, some years previous to the summer of which we write, that this strip of land should be divided into flower-beds, one being designed for each of her granddaughters. Here they could spend many hours of each day—in the dewy freshness of the morning and the sweet lull of the afternoon's repose, ere the sun seeks his fiery couch. The ground was always well and thoroughly prepared before the advent of her young guests, and this summer an additional bed had been prepared, for Alice was to be in all respects treated as one of the family.

The only stipulation which grandma ever made was, that after the beds were duly arranged and planted, each should take the entire charge of her own. They were to be well watered and kept from weeds, or the delinquent forfeited her entire right to it, and it passed into the possession of the one who

proved herself most faithful in the discharge of her duty. Grandma always took a personal supervision of the matter, and had taken care that on the arrival of the little girls they should find the box borders well clipped and trimmed, and each bed glowing in its brilliant beauty.

Verbenas, with their vivid, flashing waves of coloring; heliotrope and mignonette, with their delicate odors, the spicy carnation, and the queenly rose, all found a place, while the blue-eyed forget-me-not, the modest little lily of the valley, and the royal-robed pansy were not forgotten. The owner of each bed was allowed to dispose of its fragrant treasures as she pleased, and many were the sick-beds which were cheered and brightened by the messengers of beauty. To Alice the care of her silent friends was a never-failing source of pleasure, and she seemed to inhale new life and hope with every perfume-laden breeze.

The girls were all emulous of deserving grandma's praise, for each was conscious in her own heart that it would not be given unless deserved, for grandma, while gentle and indulgent, was also strict and impartial. One morning Alice, having finished her breakfast, started in advance of the others to her favorite place of resort, a low seat in the midst of the little garden, which had been constructed for the accommodation of the young florists. Having gained the spot, she seated herself for a moment before com-

mening the occupation of the morning. While sitting, balancing her trowel in her hand, thinking how lovely the face of Nature looked with the dew still sparkling upon it, she was accosted by the question, put in a coarse, surly tone of voice,

“Who be you?”

Looking in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, she saw the form of a boy, about a dozen years old, stretched at full length upon the ground at her feet. Whence he came, or how he attained his present position, were problems which had suggested themselves, but which she was unable to solve. The object before her presented a picture which was any thing but pleasing to her. While she enjoyed and admired rural life, as she witnessed its manifestations in grandma's well-regulated household, and in Uncle Ben's highly improved farm and neat surroundings, yet here was an element which, try as she would to overcome the feeling, marred its beauty, and produced an unpleasant sensation.

The boy before her was an ungainly specimen of country clownishness and awkwardness. The coarse linsey-woolsey jacket and pants had probably fitted his figure at some time in his past life, but his legs and arms were fast bidding adieu to them, as the sleeves of one garment reached but little below the elbow, and the other about to the knees, while in the region of the waist was an aperture of three or four inches, which, tug and pull as he would, their unfor-

fortunate owner could never make narrower. His face and hands looked as though last spring's rains had washed such an amount of mud and dirt into them that subsequent efforts had not been able to remove them, while his head had the appearance of having had a rake drawn through its bushy crown. Through its carrotty locks were generously distributed some small bits of hay and particles of dust which showed that he had recently sought acquaintance with some hay-mow. His dull, greenish-gray eyes were fixed upon Alice's face with an expression half-frightened, half-defiant, as though he were momentarily expecting to be ejected from his comfortable resting-place, but was cherishing a dogged determination stoutly to resist all attempts at such a course of procedure. By his side lay an old torn straw hat, which he was rapidly rendering less wearable by tearing it to pieces. Alice was so much surprised at his sudden appearance, that she made no reply to his question, until, in a tone still more sullen, if possible, than before, he repeated:

"I say, who be you?"

"I?" said she, at a loss for a moment what to answer. "Why, I'm Alice. I came to visit Grandma Rodman."

Just at this moment Maud came running down the walk, followed by Nellie and Fannie, their eyes wide opened in astonishment at finding Alice in such society. The boy still retained his indolent position, while Maud, rushing up to Alice, asked,

"Who's that?"

"I don't know," she answered, quietly.

"Where did he come from?" asked Fannie.

Alice assured them that she was in utter ignorance of the whole affair, while Maud, in her headlong fashion, turned toward the mysterious stranger, saying,

"What's your name, little boy?"

This question provoked a smile from the trio of listeners, inasmuch as the *little* boy was very much larger than herself, and, as his lank figure lay prone upon the ground, looked almost as tall as a man of moderate height. He paid no attention to Maud's display of curiosity until she repeated her question, when he grunted out, in his most surly tones,

"I wont tell you."

After a moment's silence, he said, shyly, but in a somewhat softer tone, indicating with his soiled forefinger to whom his remark applied,

"*I'll tell her.*"

"Well," said Alice, seeing herself selected as the person with whom he was willing to communicate, "Tell me, then, what is your name?"

"Tony," he answered, with a groan, showing his irregular, yellow teeth in a manner which rendered his face decidedly repulsive.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"Down thar," he answered, pointing with his finger in the direction of the village.

"Don't you go to school?" asked Nellie.

He glared at her a moment, and then answered, shortly,

“No!”

“Have you nothing to do?”

“Yes,” he answered, laconically.

“Why don’t you do it, then?” asked she, gently.

“Cos I don’t want ter.”

“What have you to do?”

“Work,” he answered, shortly.

Raising her eyes, Alice saw Zeke approaching with the shambling gait and general tumble-down air which were peculiar to him. With almost every other step he gave his faded and well-worn trousers a hitch, as though it were with the utmost difficulty that he could persuade them to retain their proper place. He had received the title of “Old Zeke,” for although not more than forty years of age, his hair and beard, which were allowed to “follow their own sweet will,” were already whitened and bore the appearance of old age. The skin hung in loose, flabby folds over his lantern jaws, while the brow was corrugated and seamed in every direction. Add to this the loss of several teeth, and the drooping, slouching figure, and you have the picture of a man looking nearly double his real age.

As Tony’s head lay in the opposite direction from which Zeke came, his approach was entirely unknown to the boy, who lay there in sullen silence.

“Why, sonny!” exclaimed he, as soon as he came

in sight of the recumbent figure, "what are you doin' here?"

"Nothin'."

"Why don't yer go an' pick up them taters what I dug?"

"Cos."

Zeke advanced and seated himself upon the ground in Turkish fashion; then turning toward Tony, he asked,

"Don't yer ma want yer?"

"Dunno."

Maud's curiosity by this time getting the better of her, she asked,

"Why, Zeke, is that your son?"

"Yes," he said, "this ere's my boy, beant yer, bub?" he asked, chuckling inwardly, and at the same time facetiously poking the boy in the ribs. He's his pa all over agin," he continued, complacently regarding the sulky face before him. "Aint nothin' like his mother, Tony aint."

"How many children have you, Zeke?" asked Maud.

"Got eight, mum," he answered, stopping to think a moment. "Le's see," he added, "I kinder forgit."

Then holding up his hand, and counting one off on each finger; "Thar's Tony, he's the oldest, Tony is; an' thar's Ketury Jane, an' Tempy—le's see—yes, Tempy, she comes next; and thar's Hepzy, an' Siah, an' Memby—her name," he continued, in an explana-

tory tone, "is Membrance, but we call her Memby for short. Lem me see, that's six—yes, six; but whar's the other two! O, I know; thar's the twins. We call them Abraham and Isaac. I knowed we hed two more," he added, grinning with infinite satisfaction that he had been able to recollect the two youngest hopeful scions of his house. "Then we hed two more, 'twas twins, when we was fust married, but they up an' died. Thar names was Patience an' Submission. Somehow or anuther, Polly didn't never seem ter hev very good luck with her children. She aint a very good hand ter bring 'em up, Polly aint."

"Why, Zeke," said Nellie, "I should think you'd have hard work to take care of so many?"

"La sakes, Miss Nellie! Them aint many. Why, my mother, she had fifteen children, an' she edicated us all, and brung us up ter be spectable members o' sassiety."

"That's so, Zeke," put in Uncle Ben, who had just appeared, unseen by any one but Alice.

"Yes, Mister Ben, that's so; but, then, she was a wonderful fine woman, mother was. The way she used ter make us youngsters stan' round was a caution to natur."

"Don't doubt that at all, Zeke," said Uncle Ben, looking slyly at Alice.

"But, la sakes!" continued Zeke, "dem aint brung up nothin' as we was. Polly, she gits out o'

patience, an' she kinder cuffs 'em round, an' then they do jist 'zackly as theyv'e a mind ter arter all."

"Neow, sonny," he said, addressing the ambitious youth by his side, "don't yer think yer'd better go an' pick up them taters?"

"No!" he answered, impatiently, shaking off the hand which his father laid upon his shoulder.

"Well, Zeke," said Uncle Ben, "I suppose you minded your mother better than that, didn't you?"

"I bet yer," he answered, laughing. "When she said '*Git*,' I got, yu'd better b'lieve. Come, sonny, do's I tell yer, go an' pick up them taters. You know the commandment wot says, 'Honor thy father an' thy mother;' git a promise that yer shell live ter be a old man."

"Don't want ter," growled Tony.

If Uncle Ben's love of authority had equaled his love of fun, he would have exercised it by sending the boy to his work; but he always enjoyed Zeke's "*blowin*'," and then this little by-talk between father and son had given him an insight into the parental character of the former which gave incontrovertible proof that his previous impressions were correct. The boy was being irretrievably ruined by the father's easy indifference and lack of the first principles of government. He was growing up, if possible, more lazy and more careless than his illustrious parent, who was by no means deficient in these characteristics,

with an additional ugliness and churlishness of nature which rendered him infinitely less endurable.

Zeke was mistaken when he said that Tony was "his pa all over," for while he had inherited the least desirable traits of the paternal character, he lacked the only one which presented, to outward appearance at least, the only redeeming feature, an almost imperturbable good nature. Bachelor though he was, and unskilled in the training of children, yet Ben held a theory, the practice of which would, no doubt, have worked wonders in mental and moral education had the opportunity for its exercise been presented.

"It seems to me," he said, "if I were you, I would apply some of the principles which you say worked so well in your case. I would make that boy obey me."

Zeke's turn of mind being an exceedingly literal one, he did not detect the latent irony which lurked in Ben's remark, so he answered, simply:

"Can't do it, Mr. Ben. Haint got the sperit. I'm kinder broke down, yer see. Wot with havin' to work hard, an' havin' a family to pervide fur, I aint good for nothin'."

Zeke's allusion to hard work provoked a smile from Ben, for his office as farm hand was pretty nearly a sinecure, as he managed to shirk the greater, and certainly the harder, part of the labor. As for the "pervidin'," the family wants were principally sup-

plied by Polly's needle, and by such odd jobs as she often secured from the farmers' wives.

Suddenly resolving to make an effort to arouse the boy from his lethargic state, Uncle Ben said, briskly :

"Come, Sonny, you had better go to work. I want those potatoes that are dug all in the cellar before night. Then the women folks in the kitchen are asking for chips. You will find plenty to keep you busy."

This was said kindly, but firmly, and the boy immediately aroused himself and lounged away, every now and then stooping to pick up a stone, recklessly flinging each one at one of the feathered warblers who were pouring from their tiny throats their matin song of praise.

Zeke watched his retreating figure in silence for a moment, and then sighed out, "I dunno wot ter du with that ere boy; he don't seem ter want ter do nothin' but kinder lay round all the time."

"Do with him! Why make him go to work," answered Ben, decidedly.

"Wal, Mister Ben, sometimes I kinder think he's a-goin to be one o' them are fellers wot writes varses—wot d'ye call 'em?"

"A poet?" suggested Nellie.

"Yes, Miss Nellie, yes, that's it. Well, I kinder think as how mebbe he's a goin' ter grow up one o' them fellers, cos he thinks so much, yer see."

"Thinks! Your grandfather's fiddle-stick?" ex-

claimed Ben. "Don't flatter yourself, Zeke; there's no poet soul in him. He's downright lazy, and needs a few good thrashings to arouse him out of it."

"Wal, I kinder thought as how mebbe he was a watchin' the stars, yer know, an' them things wot they write varses about."

"You didn't think he was watching the stars now while the sun is shining, did you, Zeke?" asked Ben, laughing; "I thought star gazing was always done at night. May be I'm mistaken, though, I never had much experience in that line."

"No, not zackly, but I kinder thought he mought a bin a thinkin' about em, don't yer see?"

"No, no, Zeke, I don't see. Get all that nonsense out of your head and set him to work in good earnest. You have almost ruined him, and the quicker you try to make something of him the better for both of you."

"Wal, yer see, Mister Ben, deown ter Varmount, where I was eddicated, I went ter skule in the winter, an' did the chores, feedin' the critters an' splittin' the wood, yer know, an' sich like, in the evenin's arter skule, an' then in the summer I worked onter the farm; an' yer'd better b'lieve I didn't hev no time for nothin' but work, and I got tarnation tired, an' I aint never got rested yit, an' so I kinder thought I'd let the boy play a spell an' mebbe he'll do better bimeby. But, yer see, when we're ter hum, Polly she keeps a dingin' at me 'n him ter do some pesky

thing or tuther, an' we don't neither on us never git no rest. She don't think, Polly don't, I've ben a workin' hard all day an' want ter keep kinder quiet like. But, la sakes! women don't now nothin' abeout how men feels. Fact, Mister Ben, they don't."

"O," said Ben, smiling, "women are not so bad as you think they are, Zeke. They're a dear, good set of creatures, if you only know how to treat them. But you should remember that Polly works hard all day, too. Don't you think she requires some rest as well as you?"

"Wal, I specks she does. La sakes! I aint a sayin' nothin' agin women. I kinder think as how God made 'em next ter the angels. Don't yer think he did, Mister Ben?"

"I don't know," he answered. "But now about Tony. Why don't you send him to school?"

"Wal, yer see, he don't never take to larnin' much, and so I haint never made him try it."

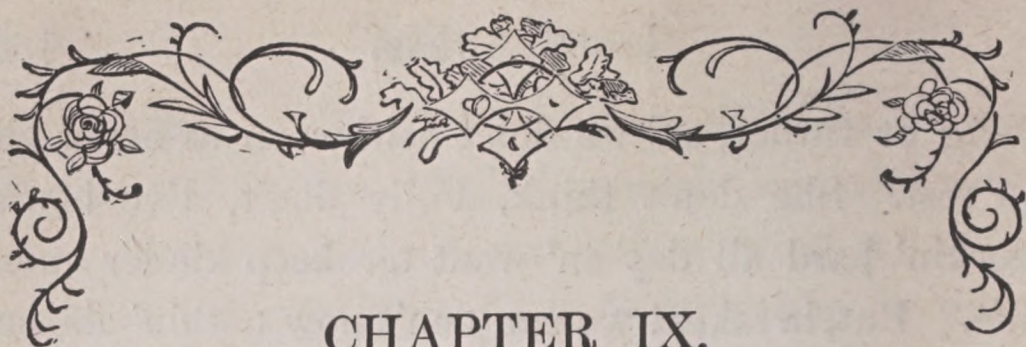
Ben wondered if he had ever made him do any thing, but contented himself by asking,

"Can he read?"

"No, no, don't know nothin'."

"O, Zeke," laughed Ben, "you expect him to be a poet, and not know how to read?"

"Wal, no, Mister Ben, but he's powerful smart, Tony is, an' I thought as how 'twould come kinder nat'ral like."



CHAPTER IX.

THE month of July, in the city, had been one of intense heat. Old Sol had poured upon the panting earth his fiercest beams, until the parched grass and the foliage, turning into its sere and yellow leaf, seemed begging for an outpouring from the great reservoir whose waters bring new life and vigor to the thirsty soil and the drooping, dying vegetation. The burning beams from his fiery car blazed in undimmed brightness. No cloud, as big as a man's hand, gave promise of the refreshing shower. It seemed as though God had forgotten to be gracious; as though he had sealed the heavens, and would melt the earth in the fierceness of his wrath. The melting, sultry days were succeeded by close, oppressive nights, when not a breath stirred the tiniest leaf, or waved a single blade of grass, or sighed its soft presence upon the exhausted frame of the invalid, whose strength was fast ebbing under the influence of this unmitigated heat.

He lay upon a low couch, so disposed before an open window that the first faint breeze would be wafted in upon him. He watched hour after hour, but watched in vain, for the slightest zephyr to cool his burning brow and parched, fevered lips.

As his wife was bending over him, bathing his aching head, and trying, with all her womanly love and sympathy, to relieve his suffering, he caught her hand, and, drawing her down toward him, imprinted a long lingering kiss upon her tremulous lips.

Opening his eyes and looking upon her with an expression which no human language could ever convey, he said, in faint tones, "Your task is almost over, Isabel, darling; I am nearly home. Heat and pain and suffering never come there, dearest," he added, with a sweet smile.

"O, Charles," she answered, "Do not say so. It is the heat which prostrates you so much. It cannot last much longer, dear. We must have a change before long, and then you will revive. Let me bathe you with some of this delicious Cologne. I am sure it will refresh you."

"One breath of God's fresh, pure air would refresh me more than gallons of that," he replied, as he extended toward her one white, almost transparent hand.

"Yes," she answered, with an attempt at cheerfulness in her voice, as she tenderly bathed the hand that he held out toward her. "Yes, and that will soon come, I am persuaded, and then you will feel so much better. See now, dearest, if I am not a true prophetess. The doctor said, only yesterday, that you might live some time, and when the autumn comes, I hope you will be stronger and more comfortable."

"Do not deceive yourself, my dear wife, the autumn rains will beat upon my grave. I have something I would like to say to you, dearest, and dare not defer it any longer. My breath is faint and short," he added, almost gasping, "but it may be fainter and shorter still, and there is no time like the present."

He lay back exhausted for a moment, and then, rallying slightly, he continued,

"I know so well what your love and devotion will prompt you to do, but, in accordance with our circumstances and with my taste, let my last resting-place be as simple and unpretending as possible. I suppose that although the comfortable dwelling in which we were so happy together has passed from our possession, I have still a right to repose in the cemetery where our little Eddie awaits the archangel's trump."

Pausing for a moment, but apparently gathering strength as he proceeded, he said,

"Whatever else you choose to plant upon my grave, let heliotropes and white chrysanthemums have a place there, because the one is emblematical of devotion and the other of cheerfulness, and I am sure, dearest, that these will be the proper expression of your heart, even as they are the exponents of your character."

A silent pressure of the hand she held was Mrs. Hamilton's only answer, while he went on,

"You have been a good and faithful wife, Isabel, a blessing from the Lord, all the years that he has permitted us to live together, and now, that the parting is so near, we must fortify ourselves by the reflection that it will be only for a little while, and that we shall spend an eternity of unclouded happiness in each other's companionship."

She had guarded herself with jealous care, lest she should yield to any manifestation of feeling in his presence, but now the flood-gates had given way, and the torrent of her grief rushed on with uncontrollable power.

The heart of a true woman is like the night-blooming cereus. It conceals its beauty and fragrance from the garish light of day, but, unfolding its delicate petals, it reveals its beauty and exhales its fragrance when the pale stars glitter in the vaulted dome above. So does she hold in reserve those qualities of mind and heart which often remain unobserved or unrecognized when happiness and peace and plenty reign, but when those whom she loves are enveloped in the darkness of sorrow or adversity, be it of greater or less extent, she unfolds those lovely characteristics which breathe light and life and joy, permeating even the heart of the afflicted one with their cheering influences. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Mrs. Hamilton had been, as her husband said, "a blessing from the Lord." She had loved him with a

devotion which stopped just short of that higher and purer feeling which she owed to God. In the early days of her married life she had struggled with the love which she feared might place an earthly object in competition with Him whom she desired to reign without a rival on the throne of her affections. She had wrestled valiantly with this peculiarly trying form of temptation, and had come off victor, for, although strictly and even rigidly conscientious in her work of self-examination, she was assured that, dear as she held this tried and trusted friend, her Saviour still ruled and reigned supreme—paramount to all others.

When the first indications of this great grief began to cast their long, dark shadows over her life, the agonized cry of her burdened heart had been, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but as the months passed on, leaden-winged, the never-failing source of help was opened to her—the Comforter came and made his abode with her, and she was enabled to add that after clause, which has been wrung from so many, many hearts through bitter, scalding tears, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Now the light of her eyes, the joy of her heart, the companion of her girlhood and of her riper years was preceding her to that home of transcendent beauty and purity which they had so loved to contemplate.

Now he was to enter upon its glories alone; would it be complete without her. And then she chid her-

self for imagining that even to him her absence could prove a source of regret amid the unspeakable delight of that glowing Presence.

It seemed to her strange now as she thought of it, but she had never fancied either there without the other. In all her visions of the better land they had advanced hand in hand to bow in adoration at the Saviour's feet. Together they had struck their golden harps in sweet accord, and their voices had rolled in joyous harmony to swell the anthems that were rising to the resounding arches of the upper temple. Now he was going there alone. Alone! Would he miss her, who for so many years had always been near him, as she—O the bitter agony of the thought!—would miss and long for him?

All the past came rushing over her. Her whole life spread out before her in panoramic views, scenes of pleasure and of pain. Incidents, long forgotten, rose unbidden, called up by the revivifying power of memory. Every thing was lived over again—the smallest act of kindness, the tender words, the looks of love unutterable, more precious, if possible, in the retrospect than in the possession, till, in the anguish of her soul, she seemed to hear the hoarse croak of Poe's raven, "Never, nevermore."

These thoughts had been in her mind many, many times, in the silence of the meditative night, when sleep forsook her eyelids, and seemed as though it would never revisit them, when she watched the rest-

less, fitful slumbers of him whom she would have given worlds for the power to relieve. Many a time had she bravely swallowed down the choking sensation in her throat, and summoned all her courage to appear calm and unruffled in his presence, lest she might produce some unwonted excitement, which would snap the slender cord which bound the longing spirit to its frail tenement.

While the passion of her grief was expending itself, his mind was full of the consoling thought which he had just expressed, and in a voice tremulous with emotion he said,

“O, Isabel, darling! does not that thought compensate for the pain of parting? Can you not give me up, dearest, knowing that you will soon follow me, that the separation will not be a final one, but that we shall soon see each other again, face to face, and spend together an eternity of unutterable joy?”

“Yes,” she replied, still sobbing, “when I think of it in that light; but O, my dear, dear husband! how shall I spend the long, long years that may intervene before that blissful future? The weary days and the wakeful nights, with this dull aching at my heart—this void that never can be filled; this vain, unappeasable longing for a sound of a beloved voice that I can never hear, for the touch of a dear hand that I can never feel. O, Charles! not all husbands and wives are to each other all that we have been, and sometimes it seems to me that this wicked, rebellious

heart refuses to give up one who is dearer to me than my own life."

She paused a moment, and then added,

"But, dearest, do not think that I am always so unresigned. O no! In answer, I believe, to my prayers, God often sends to me his angel of peace, and he enables me to say, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'"

"Yes, dear, and you will always find it so. He who has said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' will never fail in an abundant supply. Then the duties that he has laid upon you will be a blessing, and as you have never neglected the one which lay nearest, of however small apparent consequence, I have no fears for you. Be assured, dearest, you will be sustained and comforted. We have good children, Isabel, who will minister to you in your grief and loneliness. I should like to leave you above the power of anxiety in regard to worldly things, but even this may be a blessing in disguise, as it may be a wholesome neutralizer of the effect of your bereavement."

"O, Charles; not for one instant will I forget you. You will be ever present, a comfort in my hours of sorrow, an element of cheer in my despondency, a helpful bearer of my burdens. These you have always been to me in life, and these you will continue to be, for I shall feel that I have your interest and counsel still, unspoken, but not unfelt."

"Yes," he replied, thoughtfully, "and if the opinion of many is correct, that our heavenly Father, who loves to please his children, sends his messengers of mercy, through the agency of those whom they have known and loved here, who shall say that I may not be the messenger of good to my beloved ones? His angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister. Why may he not employ on such errands those who have been redeemed by the blood of his Son?"

"These are things we cannot look into," she answered, with a faint smile, "and which we shall never know till we reach that bright world; but of one thing you may rest assured, that I shall look hopefully forward to the time of our reunion, untrammelled by the fetters of sin. It may be after the lapse of years, it may be only a few fleeting months; but I am satisfied that I shall know and love you with a higher, a holier, and a purer love than any which is tinctured by the taint of earth."

"Amen," he said, solemnly. "I should like to see my little White Rose once more;" but if I never clasp her in my arms again, never imprint another kiss upon her pure lips, I shall see her in a brighter world. Tell her, darling, that papa will be ready to meet her when she reaches the pearly gate."

"I will telegraph for her if you think the end is near. Mabel will send a message immediately."

"No, no, let her remain. She is gaining strength, and the shock might be too much for her."

He lay back with closed eyes and bated breath, exhausted by the heat and the exertion of talking.

Mrs. Hamilton made no reply, but determined to consult Dr. Monroe on his morning visit, which had not yet been made. She could not herself see any indication of immediate danger, but fearing lest she might be blinded by her affection, and by her intense, longing wish to put far off the evil hour, she deemed it wiser to appeal to a higher authority. Reports from Alice were of such an encouraging nature, and, knowing, as she did, how much the child needed the life-giving properties which were being so freely poured into her system, she was unwilling to recall her unless the demand was imperative. It was just the opportunity, she thought, that she had desired for this the most delicate flower of their social wreath—such a healthful location, such kind friends—and she so much dreaded the effect of the heat, to say nothing of her grief at her father's failing condition. It seemed just as though God had raised up these friends for her, and she would trust him in this, as in every thing else, to do that which was best for all of them.

While conning these thoughts in silence a low tap at the door and its quick opening announced the presence of Mrs. Dunbar, followed by the good doctor, who just then figured so largely in her cogitations.

After some preliminary remarks on the part of the

physician, addressed to the invalid, and an assurance that he was essentially no worse, but was merely suffering from the depressing effects of the heat, Mrs. Hamilton asked,

“Then, doctor, you think it unnecessary to send for Alice?”

“O, yes,” he replied, quickly and decidedly; “let her stay where she is. She cannot have too much fresh air and new milk. Let her enjoy them while she can.”

With an arch look at the doctor, and a twinkle in her roguish eyes, Mrs. Dunbar turned her face toward her friend, saying, gayly,

“Look at me, Isabel. Do I look like a conspirator?”

“Well, no,” she answered, slowly; “at least not where much intrigue was required.”

“O you don’t half know me; does she, doctor?”

“No,” he said, laughing, “I don’t think she does. However the scales will soon fall from her eyes if you keep on. Women can’t keep a secret, so you might as well out with it.”

“O you horrid old doctor!” she exclaimed, with a pretty assumption of indignation. “Here I have been hovering about your office for the last ten days, driving you half frantic with my questions and all sorts of suggestions of possible and impossible good and ill, without so much as a hint to my dearest friend, and here you are accusing me of loquacity,

saying I can't keep a secret. I'm ashamed of you, sir; indeed I am."

Turning again toward Mrs. Hamilton, she continued,

"Now, Isabel, I am going to punish him for his want of gallantry. I am going to expose him right here in his presence. I have been conspiring against you, and he, Dr. Monroe, good friend as you think him, is my coadjutor. Innocent as he looks, he has entered heartily into my conspiracy, and is assisting me in its execution."

"Mrs. Dunbar is correct," replied the doctor, laughing; "I am her most loyal assistant in this most nefarious plot."

Then, seeing the mystified expression on Mrs. Hamilton's face, he continued,

"But come, my dear lady, this is all Greek to our good friends here. The more quickly you translate it into good plain, honest English the better."

Mrs. Hamilton's mind being in some degree relieved from the great weight which had been pressing upon it, and feeling in some sense as though a reprieve had been granted her and a precious life consigned for a little longer to her keeping, waited patiently to hear the disclosure of something—what that something was she was utterly at a loss to determine. That no new trial awaited her the happy frame of mind and cheery manner of her friends positively proved. Every thing about them, even to

the glitter of Mrs. Dunbar's elegant solitaire, and the little satisfied pat of approval which the good doctor bestowed upon his medicine case as he deposited it in his capacious pocket, seemed to say, "Well done," and to indicate the joint ownership of some pleasant secret, which evidently concerned herself, else why did they come here in this mysterious and unseemly manner to parade their little joke, however innocent in itself, before her, when her mind and heart were overshadowed by the great trial which appeared to be momentarily approaching nearer till it seemed almost at the threshold!

She began to think that, in the fullness of their pleasant excitement, they had forgotten her very natural feelings. Then there suddenly flashed a light upon her memory. The very, agreeable doctor was a widower. Now the mystery was solved. What more natural than that he and the wealthy and fascinating widow should have some plan of their own which, without in the least intending to be selfish, but simply out of the abundance of their hearts, they discussed in her presence; ay, even in that of him who was almost, yet not entirely, beyond the power of earthly interest! Quick as the lightning's wing a feeling of self-reproach came over her, for she believed that he was sufficiently unselfish, even now, to rejoice with a friend in the prospect of earthly happiness.

Taking the doctor's hint, Mrs. Dunbar said,

“ Well, Isabel, I presume my valuable assistant is silently bemoaning the loss of his precious time, so I may as well allow the fact to beam upon you that we have made arrangements for a change of residence for you. No, not a word,” she continued; “ you have no voice in the matter. I know all you would say—impossible, impracticable, and all that sort of nonsense, but I am going to have you and yours in my house before night, so we may as well proceed to business.”

“ I—I don’t understand—I mean I don’t see.”

“ No, I know you don’t see, dear,” interrupted the kind-hearted little woman, throwing her arm around Mrs. Hamilton’s neck and giving her an affectionate kiss, “ but we do, and every thing is ready. I enlisted Dr. Monroe in my plan in order to give a show of authority and prudence to my proceedings. A room is all prepared for the dear, sick husband, with the bed waiting for him to stretch his poor, tired limbs upon it. See, the doctor is all attention to answer all your questions, remove all your apprehensions, and silence all your fears. Isn’t that true, doctor ?”

“ Yes,” he replied, smiling, “ quite true, my dear Mrs. Hamilton ; you need not indulge the slightest apprehension. Every thing has been most satisfactorily arranged, and I see the prospect of none but good effects from the change. Our friend here has her carriage at the door, with two stout servants, who

will assist the good man to a comfortable position, and you and I will accompany him to see that no shadow of harm comes to him."

"But, Mabel," replied the lady addressed, putting her hand to her head, while a puzzled look passed over her face, "I don't know—I can't think."

"No, no, dearie, you needn't think; it is not at all necessary; we will do all that for you. You are all to be my guests till you find a home which will suit you better, one where you can be happier than you will be with me. Do you hear, dearest?" she asked, as she noticed an expression of intense gratitude mingled with the independence which formed so large an ingredient in her friend's character; "you cannot refuse to come to me in my loneliness," she continued, in a pretty coaxing way, which was infinitely becoming, and which her own experience had taught her was irresistible. "You cannot have the heart, Isabel, to leave me all alone in that great house, where I might be cheered and comforted by the sight of your dear face and the presence of your good husband and children. I want to see youthful faces in my home, and to hear fresh young voices ringing through the halls."

"But, Mabel, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, "think of our numbers. Think what a burden we shall be. You are proposing to assume more than you are aware of. I cannot think of imposing upon your generosity in this wholesale manner."

"I will think of nothing," she replied, in her impetuous eagerness, "except that you are going to confer upon me the greatest favor that I ever asked of any human being. I need you, Isabel; I must have you. Come to me. You will, will you not?" she asked, while a tear of genuine emotion filled her bright eye. "I want to help you nurse your husband back to health and strength. You shall see what astonishing soups and jellies I will have prepared for him. He shall have dishes fit for the gods."

"You have conquered, you dear, generous creature," replied Mrs. Hamilton, almost overcome by this tender consideration for her husband's comfort; "I will oppose you no longer. God's will be done."

"Bravo! Now, then, doctor, will you have the kindness to summon our sable assistants, and see that your patient is safely conducted to the blue room? I have left orders with my cook to have some refreshment prepared for him. Please remember, O most sage and skillful Esculapius, that I give you *carte-blanche* to make use of any thing the house contains either for yourself or this precious pair of invalids, for, in my opinion, they both come under that head."

"Thank you," he answered, laughing. "Be careful that you don't place too powerful temptation in my way. Poor, weak human nature, you know, Mrs. Dunbar."

"I trust you," she replied, gayly. "Come, Isabel,

don your bonnet, and be off. Mabel and I will make short work in disposing of things here, and will join you at luncheon."

"Yes," said the doctor, "'Twere well 'twere done quickly.' It will not be as favorable for removal a day hence. There will be a change of weather in less than twenty-four hours," he added, oracularly.

"I don't know where you see it," answered the sprightly widow, more from a spirit of contradiction than from any knowledge of that whereof she affirmed. "The whole expanse of heaven is clear cerulean. Not a cloud as big as a man's hand is to be seen anywhere."

"All right," he replied, with a wise look, as he descended the stairs; "you'll think of my prediction about twelve o'clock to-night when the thunder rolls and the lightning flashes till you're scared out of half your senses."

"Don't make such horrid prophecies. I'm always frightened to death in a thunder-storm!" she exclaimed, going to the head of the stairs and looking over to catch a last look at the departing trio.

"Better be prepared for it, then. Time to get over such nonsense," he called back, as he entered the carriage and was driven slowly away.



CHAPTER X.

THE work of demolition was soon accomplished. As the rooms had been hired furnished there was but little to be disposed of. A few cooking utensils, some ornaments of an inexpensive character, with the scanty and well-worn wardrobe of the family, constituted all that remained to them of their former abundance. Bureau drawers and closets were soon emptied of their contents, and trunks packed, and Mrs. Dunbar and Mabel were about to take a final leave of the lonely apartments which the latter had learned to call home, when a man presented himself at the open door, and, handing in a small box on which he said the expressage had been paid, disappeared as suddenly as he came.

“Just in time!” exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar. “A few moments later and we should have been gone. From Allie, too. What a disappointment it would have been!”

“Yes,” replied Mabel, gently; “but did you ever think, Mrs. Dunbar, that God takes care things often do come to us ‘just in time?’”

She had learned her mother’s way of recognizing God in all things, and she continued, thoughtfully,

"This is a matter of comparatively small importance, involving, so far as we know, nothing more serious than a passing disappointment; but in things which produce great and even grand results he often sends the means for their timely accomplishment."

"Do you think, dear," asked the other, gently, "that God is interested in the affairs which concern each one of us—affairs I mean of every-day life? Those which affect the universe, are all governed by him, of course, in a general way, but are we not lost sight of and merged in the great whole over which he presides?"

"O, no!" answered Mabel, earnestly, "I don't think so. I delight in the thought that I, insignificant as I am among the millions of created beings, am not overlooked, but that he knows and supplies all my needs. I was thinking only this morning that God had sent you just in time to make my dear father so much more comfortable than he could be here, and, if your discovery of us had been deferred a few weeks longer, it might have been too late for him to profit by your generosity."

"Then if that be so, Mabel dear, how do you account for it that I did not find him before? then this change might have been made earlier, and possibly your father might not have suffered so much from the heat and other causes as he has done."

"Well, answered Mabel, timidly, "indeed, dear Mrs. Dunbar, I do not like to appear to be instructing

you ; but may it not be that he tries our faith by withholding the relief until just before it would be too late ? Do you remember when Abraham would have offered Isaac as a sacrifice, the ram was not caught in the thicket until just in time to prevent the deed. The knife was already raised above the boy's breast, in readiness to perform the fatal act, when the provision of a substitute was made known to him. Well, I declare ! " she added, recollecting herself and coloring deeply, " I did not mean to preach you a sermon."

Mrs. Dunbar hesitated a moment, and then said,

" Well, perhaps you are right. I acknowledge that I have never thought very deeply upon these subjects ; but, then, I did not have Christian parents as you have, Mabel."

There was a wistfulness in the tone and manner in which this answer was given that touched the girl inexpressibly, and she replied, gently,

" Begin now, dear Mrs. Dunbar. It is not too late."

Mrs. Dunbar turned hastily away to conceal the emotions which were visible on her noble features. Quickly recovering herself, she said,

" Well, I believe our task is done. We will leave these things here for the benefit of the next tenant."

Then looking at her watch she added,

" We shall have plenty of time to reach home before luncheon. I told James to be here at noon with the carriage. He is usually very punctual. I

wonder he is not here. Ah! here he is," she exclaimed, as the sound of wheels and the prancing of horses' feet announced his arrival.

However our circumstances may be improved, it matters not how superior the accommodations which await us, there is always a sadness in leaving the place which has been our home. That sacred word embodies so many affections, such sparkling joys, such deep, dark sorrows, the birthplace often of our heart's dearest and tenderest love. There is always, and must necessarily be, to the thoughtful mind a feeling of attachment, a cluster of memories clinging around the dismantled walls, the denuded casements, that even through the bare, unhomelike aspect, the grim desolate appearance of every room carries us back to the days that are gone, never to be recalled. The walls become repeopled with the faces of the loved which once hung there; the empty rooms echo with their voices, and tears start unbidden as we bid each familiar spot a mute farewell.

When they reached the house Mrs. Dunbar drew Mabel into the library, and, closing the door, she pressed a warm kiss upon her lips, saying,

"Welcome home, Mabel dear. It shall be your home until you leave it to share a far dearer one with the object of your heart's choice."

Mabel's feelings were too deeply moved for a reply, and she followed her kind hostess in silence to her father's room.

"Mrs. Dunbar's house was one of those palatial mansions of which New York is so justly proud. Occupying the south-west corner of two of its most magnificent streets, its location was as unrivaled as its architecture was imposing.

When Mabel entered the room which had been assigned to her father's use her face became radiant, and, going up to him, she threw her arms around his neck, exclaiming,

"O, papa! I am so glad to see you once more in the midst of surroundings that look so comfortable and so cozy, and where every thing is so lovely!"

"Thank you, darling," he replied, taking her hands in one of his, and with its fellow stroking her soft hair and speaking features. "My daughter is pleased to see me here in such a mansion as this—how much more will she rejoice when she meets me in the one to which I am going before her, the one 'not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'"

Mabel fell on her knees beside his couch, and gently caressing the thin, scant locks and the sunken cheeks, she said, in a low voice,

"O, yes; that will be better still."

Then, in a firmer, louder tone, she asked,

"Did the fatigue of moving distress you much?"

"O, no!" he answered, smiling. "It was all done so gently and with such thoughtful care, that I don't think that I am any the worse for it. Dr. Monroe left me some medicine to take in case I should

experience any unfavorable results, but I think it will be unnecessary."

"By the way!" exclaimed Mabel, suddenly recollecting the little box which in her excitement she had forgotten, "I think I have something which will do you more good even than the doctor's medicine. Here it is," she added, playfully holding it up before his eyes. "It is from your little White Rose, and I will open it at once."

"O!" she exclaimed, as she removed the lid, and saw reposing upon their snowy bed of damp cotton a small collection of lovely flowers.

"Just see, papa; how exquisite! And here is a little note, too. Let us see what the darling says."

"I thought," wrote Alice, "that papa would like these flowers, because, besides being so pretty, they grow in the little garden that grandma gave me. O, mamma! they are so kind to me, that if I didn't keep thinking of papa being sick and in pain, I should be very happy. Dear Mrs. Morrison selected and arranged my flowers for me, because I wanted to send those that have a nice meaning to them, and she said that papa would know what they mean, and so I hope they will speak nice, loving words to him, just as I would do if I were near enough. There is one there that I like very much, the heliotrope, because Mrs. Morrison says that it means devotion, and papa knows that I am his devoted little daughter,

"ALICE."

Mr. Hamilton took the sweet offering, and with dewy eyes pressed it to his lips. Then, as he inhaled their delicious fragrance, he said,

“Dear little human flower! These are scarcely sweeter than she.”

“There!” exclaimed Mabel, laughing, “didn’t I tell you that I had something that would revive you? And mamma, too, something has done her good already. I don’t know whether it is Allie’s flowers or this pleasant change which has affected her so much. She looks as though she had swallowed a powerful tonic.”

“Say rather a cordial, Mabel, dear,” answered her mother, “for that implies comfort as well as renewed vigor. In view of such kindness as we have received, how can I be otherwise than cheered and comforted? Your dear father bore the fatigue so much better than I feared, that my heart is full of thankfulness. And I am sure we can never repay so kind a friend.”

“No, indeed,” answered Mabel, looking around with admiring eyes; “she has treated us as though we were nabobs.”

The apartments assigned to the Hamilton family consisted of a *suite* directly over the parlors, and corresponding with the ones opening on the other side of the hall occupied by the mistress of the mansion. The one appropriated to Mr. Hamilton’s use being a corner room, with windows on two sides, commanded

a view of some of the most stately and elegant dwellings in the city, as well as of the stream of sumptuous equipages and stylishly dressed pedestrians who thronged its aristocratic avenues.

A carpet of soft neutral tints, with a delicate tracery of blue, covered the floor. Its deep velvety tufts gave back no echoing tread, but one felt inclined to stoop and pick the tiny clusters of field daisies and forget-me-nots, which were lightly scattered over its surface, being persuaded that they would form a lovely breast-knot for some fair damsel.

Not so lovely, however, were they as the exquisite natural beauties which, formed into bouquets, filled rare antique vases or tiny bud-holders of cut glass and silver, breathing their grateful odors through the rooms. The furniture of the two kinds of walnut, so much sought after in these modern days, but of quaint, antique design and exquisite finish, formed to supply every imaginable want, each piece filling its appropriate place.

A few choice paintings adorned the walls, while in one corner upon a pedestal stood a bust of one of America's greatest poets—the venerable and lamented Bryant. Various other elegant little trifles were disposed about, making the room a most charming retreat from the heat and glare of the sun, as well as from the vulgarity and confusion of the bustling world. The low grate, with its bars of polished steel, and its graceful setting, looking so cool now, was

nevertheless suggestive of warmth and comfort in the lusty, rollicking winter.

Mr. Hamilton's couch had been placed in range with the west windows, whose draperies having been removed afforded him a view of some fine maples, the graceful proportions and luxuriant foliage of which pleased his artistic eye. His faithful wife sat by his side plying her fan and trying to make him as comfortable as possible during the hours of that scorching day.

"See, Isabel," he said, pointing out of the window, "I believe there is a breeze rising. There is certainly a stirring of the leaves. They have been so long motionless it is a pleasant sight to see them move. It may bring us a shower."

"Yes," she replied, after watching for a moment, "you are right, and I do hope that before long there will be 'a sound of abundance of rain.'"

Dr. Monroe was correct, and when Mrs. Dunbar was awakened at midnight from her first sleep by the crashing of the thunder and the lightning's flash, she did think, as he had playfully bade her, of his prophecy, and tried to overcome the terror which, fight against it as she would, she could not subdue. It was useless to call herself childish and resolve to put it out of her thoughts, and cover her eyes with her hands and go to sleep. Another rolling peal, another flash, and her bravery was all gone and her terror returned with redoubled force.

Mabel, too, was wakeful, finding it impossible to sleep, not so much from fear of the storm as from the strangeness of her surroundings, and the nervousness consequent upon the excitement of the day. She tried in vain to compose herself to sleep, but it seemed as though her eyes were incapable of closing, or were determined that nothing should induce them to cease their vigilance.

Presently she saw, or thought she saw, a white, robed figure enter the room, and although not superstitious or weak-minded, she involuntarily shuddered, and a chill ran through her frame. The ever-present dread of her father's becoming suddenly worse, and of the time which she knew must come, was uppermost, and fearing, she scarcely knew what, she asked, in trembling tones,

“Is that you, mamma?”

“No, Mabel dear, it is I. Do not be alarmed, there is nothing the matter, except that I could not sleep, and I was selfish enough to come and see if you are wakeful, too,” answered Mrs. Dunbar, as softly as she could. “I am so frightened; may I come and lie down by you? Just see how I am shaking with terror. Feel my hands.”

Mabel took the extended hands in both of hers, and exclaiming, “Why how cold they are!” tried to chafe them and soothe the agitated heart. “Are you always so much alarmed?” she asked.

“O yes, always; and I am so glad to have you all

here in the house with me. Just imagine me in this great house, with no one but the servants, shaking and trembling with fear in every thunder storm !”

“What a pity,” was the gentle answer, “that you suffer so much. Is it constitutional ?”

“O no, not constitutional,” she replied, shuddering. “I was in a house when I was very young that was struck by lightning. One of the servants was killed, and since that I have always experienced this nervous tremor whenever I see the lightning. I always begin to feel it when a shower is approaching, and although I have struggled against it, it is impossible for me to rise above it. My husband used to say it was all nonsense, but he didn’t know, and there was so little in common between us that I never told him the cause of it.”

“Well, dear Mrs. Dunbar—”

“Call me auntie,” she interrupted. “Your mother and I are as dear to each other as any sisters ; so I am to be ‘auntie’ to all of you.”

“Thank you, dear auntie,” replied Mabel, drawing still closer to the trembling form beside her. “I think there is but one way to look at this, as at every other harmful agent, or—rather,” she said, correcting herself, “any agent which possesses elements of harm, and that includes every thing we see and feel, that God is in them all, making subservient to his purpose those elements which are constituent to all things—elements of good and of evil ; that he is in the storm as

well as in the calm ; on the lightning's wing, and in the thunder's roar, as well as in the gentlest breeze that blows. It always seems to me that the thunder is his voice, and I like to listen and try to understand what he says."

"I would give a great deal to feel so, but to me there is no beauty, no majesty, nothing but abject terror even in the contemplation of it, and it is always an absolute relief to me when the season of showers is past."

"'He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night ; nor for the arrow that flieth by day. . . . A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand ; but it shall not come nigh thee. . . . For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.'"

These words quoted by Mabel in a low voice seemed to produce a soothing effect, and as the violence of the storm was soon exhausted, Mrs. Dunbar sunk into a peaceful slumber.

The next morning broke dark, rainy, and chilly, with one of those sudden changes which, in this variable climate, we so often experience, and which seem in a few hours to transport us from almost tropical heat to a temperature in some degree resembling that of the polar regions. The fountains were

opened at last, and a steady fall of rain continued all day. The thirsty earth at last was drinking its fill of the pure cooling drops.

Going to the room occupied by her little brothers, Mabel found them both awake, and Charlie, the elder, sitting up in bed with an expression of more than usual thoughtfulness on his bright face.

"Sister Mabel," he said, as soon as she appeared, a pleasant picture framed in the door-way; "how long will it be before I shall be a man?"

"O! a good many years, Charlie," she answered, smiling. "A little boy of eight years old will have to study a great deal and do a great deal of playing before he gets to be a man. But what makes my little brother so anxious to grow up all at once?"

"Why," he replied, "I heard papa the other day praying to God that Georgie and I might grow up to be good men and help mamma, but I don't want to wait so long; I want to begin now, right now," replied the little fellow, clenching his fist in the intensity of his strong purpose.

"But you must wait God's time, Charlie dear, and until he makes you big and strong enough he will find somebody else to help mamma."

"Can't I do it now?" he asked, with great, earnest eyes.

"Yes," replied his sister, smiling. "You and Georgie can both help mamma and papa by being good, obedient little boys, by going to school and

studying hard, so that you may grow up to be intelligent and good men. Isn't that worth trying for?"

Both little boys gave a simultaneous assent, and springing lightly out of bed, began a vigorous process of dressing, as though determined to commence their efforts for the achievement of their great wish.

Thanks to the ward schools of the city, where are to be found the children of some of its best and most substantial citizens, these little boys were laying the foundation of a solid education, which, as Mabel had said, would enable them to grow up men of intelligence, and good practical knowledge.

Entering the parlor after breakfast, she found Mrs. Dunbar engaged in disposing some lovely flowers in the exquisite vases which adorned the room. After watching in silence for a moment the graceful arrangement formed by her nimble fingers, she said,

"Please, auntie, give me something to do."

"Something to do, dear! Why, I thought your time was fully occupied already."

"O no; mamma will scarcely allow me to do any thing for papa, and my music pupils do not occupy all my time; but if I were three times as busy as I am, I should still wish to be doing something for you, to show my love and gratitude."

"Which is all very unnecessary, my dear child; but if you desire some occupation, I shall give the laborious task of a daily arrangement of flowers for the parlor and for your own rooms. There is always

an abundant supply. Take from the conservatory or garden, just such as please you, and as many as you choose."

"O, auntie, thank you; that will be delightful. But may I not decorate your rooms, also?"

"By all means, if you wish; but do not take too much upon yourself, or you will become fatigued before you commence your teaching."

"No danger, auntie dear. You shall see how artistic my arrangement will be; only don't scold me if I rob the conservatory of too much beauty."

"Never fear," was the laughing rejoinder, as Mabel started off on her round of daily duties.

In relating to her mother both her conversations of the preceding day, Mabel said:

"Don't you think, mamma, if auntie were a Christian, this fear would be taken away from her? You know David says he will not fear even though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

"I think that, undoubtedly, much of it would be removed, more especially as she is not naturally timid or superstitious. As a girl, she was always courageous, and generally foremost in all the mad-cap exploits in which young ladies, while at school, often indulge. She was then, apparently, afraid of nothing. I do not think it probable that her married life has changed her very materially in that respect, so I have no doubt that the terrible accident of which she told you is the sole cause."

"I wish she were a Christian," sighed Mabel, "and, mamma, I think she wishes so, too."

"We must pray for her, my dear, and we must also remember that the daily life of those who profess to be Christians does very much to woo or to repel others. Let us be very watchful that we do nothing to lower the standard of Christian character, but rather strive to win her to the same blessed faith, and to recommend the religion of Jesus by such a course of living as he shall approve."





CHAPTER XI.

GRANDMA RODMAN was right. Alice's cheeks were becoming rounded, and in place of the colorless purity which they had hitherto worn, there began to be visible a faint roseate flush. It would be too much to say that she was in any degree approximating toward Maud's plump and rosy looks, but this was at least a beginning, and a bright earnest of that improvement which a few more weeks passed in an atmosphere both physically and morally so beneficial might effect for her.

"Halloo, youngsters!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, as he came sauntering along toward the pleasant spot where the quartette of little girls usually spent the hours when the sun began to cast long shadows upon the smoothly-shaven lawn and the brilliant flower beds previous to his departure for the other side of the globe. They loved to watch his declining rays, and so, after their early tea, they would betake themselves to this little bower where they could receive his good-night benediction.

"Halloo!" he repeated, seeing them almost breathlessly watching a peculiarly brilliant sunset, each one seeing something which, in imagination, closely resembled some tangible form with which she was familiar.

“O!” exclaimed Maud, “see that bird. I can see all the feathers in its wings. O, I hope it wont fly away!”

“What a silly wish, Maud,” said Fannie, with a very wise look. “Of course it will fly away. There it goes now.”

“Yes,” said Nellie, “it is going, Maudie; but I can see more than its feathers. I can see a little tuft on the top of its head—a top-knot, I suppose it is—and its beak, and, O, Maud, I can see the down on its breast. What a beauty! But it’s changing now,” she added, in a tone of regret.

“What do you see, Allie?”

“I see,” said Alice, quietly gazing with rapt eyes on a pile of gorgeous flame-colored clouds, “a chariot of fire and horses of fire. O, Nellie,” she whispered in a low voice, in which was mingled a strong element of awe, “it seems to me that I see Elisha standing there, and hear him saying, ‘My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!’ O, see! it is going up, and doesn’t it seem to you that you see Elijah’s mantle falling?”

“O, Allie,” answered Nellie, “what an imaginative little thing you are! and you are so earnest and solemn about it, too,” she added, giving her a warm kiss. “You make me think I see it all, whether I do or not.”

As the sunset was fading Uncle Ben, at last, gained a hearing.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "so you are all so much engaged with Old Sol's cloud-pictures that you can't notice me. Hey, princess!" he said, seating himself by her side and pinching her cheek, which was flushed with the last rays of departing day, "what do you say to a grand picnic and a nice ride over to the lake?"

"O," she answered, looking up quickly, "I think it would be splendid."

"You do, eh, fairy?" he said, laughing. "Well, that's enough. A fairy princess has only to issue her commands, and they are obeyed."

"O, Uncle Ben," interrupted Maud, "when are we to have it?"

"Whenever it suits her royal highness," he replied, turning to Alice with a low bow and mock humility of tone. "Will your highness be pleased to name the day?"

"Just when it suits you," she replied, while a bright color suffused her face.

"In sooth, you are a very accommodating princess. Well, dumpling, as the princess has delegated her authority to me, I hereby proclaim that to-morrow, if it please yon majestic orb, whose exit we have just witnessed, to visit us with his cheering beams, we propose to make a jolly little party, have a sail on the lake, and return by moonlight. Will that please you, princess?"

"Just exactly," she answered, looking into his face with a pleased smile.

"Shall we take our dinner with us?" asked Maud, eagerly.

"The supply of suitable nutriment for the gastro-nomic organs is with you a prime consideration, isn't it, dumpling? Well, let me assure you, that every attention has been paid to that part of the programme, and the larder has been taxed to its utmost capacity. The feminine portion of the household, whose duty it is to attend to the culinary department, have provided an inviting bill of fare, to which, I have no doubt, you will do ample justice. Nothing has been omitted that can in any way contribute to the creature comforts of the princess, or of you and your esteemed associates. The more mature portion of the company, myself included, flatter themselves that they have managed the arrangements admirably. The carriage is in its best possible show and shine, and the horses, being in their finest trim, have received orders to conduct themselves like the well-behaved quadrupeds that they are. '*Them's aristocratic hosses, them is.*' Therefore, be it known to you, that if the heavens are propitious, and no unforeseen and irremediable circumstances conspire to prevent our enjoyment of the proposed trip, we shall leave the manor-house immediately after the matutinal meal. The princess and her train will please be in readiness at that hour, in order that we may encounter no delay, as the fresh morning hours are preferable for so long a drive."

Having finished this grandiloquent speech, he turned away, laughing, and retraced his steps.

"O, Uncle Ben," called out Nellie, "you are too absurd! What put such nonsense into your head?"

"Don't know, Nellie. I suspect if my brain were dissected there would be found a great deal more nonsense than the opposite commodity. But wouldn't I make a good courtier?"

"First-rate," she answered, laughing.

As he turned he caught the outline of Alice's figure as it was brought out in bold relief against the dark background formed by the hedge. Her slight form and ethereal loveliness were intensified by the very decided contrast, as well as by the almost unearthly glow imparted by the fading light. In that lingering look she became photographed upon his memory, and the impression was never effaced.

Nellie's answer had scarcely been given, when grandma's voice was heard warning them that the nightly dews were beginning to fall, and that they had better return to the house. As Alice rose from her seat to obey the summons, she felt a slight twitch on the skirt of her dress, and looking down she saw the greenish eyes and gaunt figure of Tony. No one had noticed in the gathering twilight the poor, dilapidated looking object that lay stretched upon the ground, between the low seat occupied by Alice and the thick hedge beyond.

He held up his fingers with a gesture of silence,

but still retained his hold upon her dress as though afraid that she would escape him. She said nothing, and the girls followed Uncle Ben to the house, not noticing that she had remained behind.

"Say," said Tony, eagerly, as he saw them leisurely moving away, "Be you from York?"

"Yes," she answered, briefly.

"I'm sorry," he said, "cos then I don't want ter have nothing ter do with yer."

"Why?" she asked, with wondering eyes.

"Cos," he replied, shortly.

"Because what? If you want to say any thing to me, Tony, say it. I must go on; it is getting dark."

"Wal, cos, if all the York gals is like that proud thing down ter hum, I don't want ter have nothin' ter do with 'em. I hate her!" he exclaimed, vehemently.

"O, Tony, don't you know you musn't hate any body?" asked Alice, gently. "You know Christ said so."

"Who's he?"

"Why, Tony, don't you know who Jesus Christ is? The dear Saviour who died for us?"

"No," he answered, looking at her with a stupid stare. "Don't know nothin' abeout him. Never heerd tell on him."

"Don't you go to Sunday-school?"

"No."

Alice was shocked at the pitiable ignorance of this untrained youth. He had reached the age of twelve

without ever having heard that Name which she had been taught was above every name. She had heard of heathen, and it seemed to her that here was one right before her eyes. She tried, in her childish fashion, to tell him of the great redemption purchased for sinners by the Saviour of whom she spoke, and of the sacrifice once offered on Calvary, but she had to deal with an unappreciative listener. At first he listened with eyes wide open with astonishment, but, like many an older and more intelligent caviler, he had not much faith in a personage who lived more than eighteen hundred years ago.

He interrupted her by asking, "Say, be you all a-goin' on that there picnic?"

"Yes," answered Alice.

"Wish't I could go too," he half sobbed out. "I don't never go no whares."

Alice made no reply, feeling that she had no voice in the matter, and yet pitying the poor forlorn child of poverty and neglect.

"Couldn't you jist ax Mr. Ben ter let me go?" he asked, in such a tone of entreaty, that she determined, in spite of her timidity, to make the attempt. She had abundant proof that Uncle Ben would do almost any thing to please her, besides she believed that his good nature and kindly feeling would induce him to accede to the request.

Seeing him returning in quest of her, she turned hastily away, saying,

"Well, Tony, I'll see what I can do; but you know, I haven't really any right to ask him, and then, there may not be room. But don't be downhearted because you're poor, and because, as you say, you never go anywhere. May be you'll see better times some day, somehow, I think almost every body does some time in his life. Why, I'm poor," she added, in a low, shy tone, "and Jesus Christ was a great deal poorer than either of us, because he had no home, only the stable where he was born."

"Didn't he?" asked Tony, in a half-indifferent manner, and yet with a slowly awakening interest.

"No," replied Alice, "but I can't tell you any more about him now, because Uncle Ben is coming to look for me, and it's almost dark, but I'll tell you all about him some other time. Good-night, Tony."

"Good-night," he answered, half sulkily. "Be yer sure you'll ax Mr. Ben?"

"Well, yes, I guess so."

Alice's task was more easy of accomplishment than she had imagined, but had it been tenfold as difficult she would, nevertheless, have performed it. Hers was one of those intensely conscientious natures which, seeing a duty, or something which it conceives to be a duty, will execute it, however distasteful it may prove to be.

Seeing her talking with Tony, Uncle Ben veiled his surprise and curiosity under a bantering manner, exclaiming,

"Well done! Our fairy princess must surely be dispensing her favors to that poor, benighted child of earth! But, then, that's after the manner of fairies, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied, somewhat absently; "but, O, Uncle Ben, I am so sorry he has not any body to teach him. He doesn't know any thing about the Saviour. He says he never heard of him. Isn't that dreadful?"

"Yes, it is dreadful. Poor little chap! I'm afraid he don't have the best training in the world."

Tightening her hold upon the hand of her companion, as though nerving herself to ask the question which she longed and yet dreaded to ask, she said, in a slightly embarrassed hesitating manner,

"Uncle Ben, I want to ask a favor of you. May I?"

"A favor!" he repeated, with an air of simulated astonishment. "A fairy princess ask a favor of one of her subjects! That is an unheard of condescension. Why! you have only to command, and I, as in duty bound, obey."

"O, Uncle Ben!" she exclaimed, laughing, in spite of her earnestness, at his comical face and manner. How funny you are. But really, I do want you to do something for me, will you?"

"Do something for you? Of course, in virtue of my office as court chamberlain I hold myself in readiness to do whatever the princess royal of the fairy realm may require."

"Now, please be serious a minute, while I tell you what I want you to do." Then, with a quick and determined effort, she said, "I want you to please let Tony go with us to-morrow, and—and I want you to let him go to school in the village."

"Whew-w," whistled Uncle Ben, "why, there are two favors. Do you expect me to grant them both? Just imagine, here's my fairy asking me to grant her a favor, and then when she has bewitched me on to the verge of a promise, she sees her advantage, and tacks another right on to the rear end of the first."

"Now, I've caught you," she exclaimed, playfully shaking her finger at him with an arch look. "You told me that I had only to command, and you would obey."

"So I did, fairy. Now you have got me," he answered, putting up both hands in a deprecating manner. "Well, well, I promise. Your royal highness's commands shall be obeyed." Then dropping his light tone he asked, abruptly, "Allie, would it please you very much to have Tony pleased?"

"Yes, Uncle Ben," she answered, relapsing into her former earnestness of manner, while the eloquent blood mounted to her brow. "You will forgive me, won't you, but poor Tony wants to go so much, and he seems so forsaken—at least, I don't mean," she added, coloring again this time painfully, "that—that you are not kind to him, but he hasn't a happy home, you know, and good, kind parents, as Maud and I

have, and I was thinking if he had somebody to care more for him, may be he might be a better boy. I don't believe any of us would be very good if we didn't have any body to love us and to help us to do right, do you?"

"I guess you're about right," he answered; "but why should you care whether Tony is good and happy, or not? He isn't any thing to you, you know; only a poor little stranger whom you never saw in your life until a few weeks ago."

"O, but, Uncle Ben, didn't the Saviour die for him just as much as for us? and isn't there just as much reason why he should be a good boy and go to heaven when he dies? Why, Uncle Ben, don't you remember Jesus Christ didn't choose the rich? You know his disciples were all poor men, and he preached to the poor people in the streets."

"How do you know so much about all this, Allie?" he asked, trying to draw out her intelligent answers, that he might watch her sparkling eyes and the play of her speaking features.

"Why," she answered, quickly, "I've read it in the Bible ever so many times, and it says, 'The common people heard him gladly.' And it says, too, that he chooses 'the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.' O, Uncle Ben," she said, again clasping the hand which in her earnestness she had relinquished, "You will let Tony go to school and learn to read his Bible, wont you?"

"Yes," he answered, huskily, "if his father will consent. But now, as to the question of ways and means for to-morrow. What shall we do with the youngster?"

"O, you can fix that," she replied, confidently, "if you will only let him go."

"All right; he shall go, to please you. Remember, we'll stow him away among the baskets." Then resuming his light tone, he said, "As fairies don't subsist on mortal food, there will be no danger of your skirmishing for supplies and so mistaking his long claws for a succulent morsel of frog, is there?"

Before Alice had time to reply to this question they reached the house, where they were assailed by numberless inquiries as to the cause of their long stay. Uncle Ben, having quizzed and mystified the eager little group to his heart's content, and duly notified them of the important acquisition to their party, they all scampered off to bed in high glee, to be prepared for the anticipated delights of the coming day.

Making his way early the next morning to the door of the kitchen, where grandma was busily preparing baskets and pails of edibles and drinkables, Tony said, gruffly, without any previous salutation,

"Where's that gal?"

"What girl?" asked grandma, "Maud?"

"No; t'other one, with the big eyes."

"O," she replied, "You mean Allie. She hasn't come down yet, Tony." Then, seeing his disap-

pointed look, she asked, kindly, "Did you want to see her?"

"Yes," he answered, blubbering. "She promised ter ax Mr. Ben ef I moughtn't go with 'em this mornin', but I reckon she's forgot all about it."

"Not so fast, my boy," said Uncle Ben, who had entered by an opposite door, just in time to hear these words and their piteous tone; "she did ask me, and it's all settled. So go and make yourself presentable, neat and clean, mind you, old fellow, and thank Miss Alice for all the pleasure you enjoy."

"What have you there, Tony?" asked grandma, as she marked the quick transition from disappointment to this sudden realization of his hopes. Raising the lid of the tin kettle he held in his hand, he displayed, with pardonable pride, some luscious blackberries with the early dew still sparkling upon them.

"There," he exclaimed, the pupils of his greenish eyes dilating as he spoke; "I picked 'em all for her. Aint they bully?"

"They are very fine," answered grandma, smiling. "Allie will thank you very much, I know. Now run and make yourself tidy, and hurry back, so that you will not keep us waiting."

Hastily depositing his kettle upon the table, with a hasty "Yes 'm," he started on a run, never stopping until he reached the creek, which he encountered on his way home, when, plunging in, he administered such a scrubbing as his utmost stretch of memory

could not recall. Having performed his ablutions in this sylvan bath-tub, without the aid of Turkish towels or other toilet luxuries, he quickly donned such articles of apparel as, even to his rude ideas, were considered necessary, and resumed his rapid pace, until he landed in his mother's kitchen, when, rushing past her to the garret—which constituted his sanctum—he dropped his begrimed garments, and, thrusting his ungainly proportions into a more respectable, because a cleaner, suit, he was just starting anew on his race toward Rodman's farm, when Zeke came hitching along in his usual leisurely style, as though he thoroughly believed his own often-repeated saying, "O, thar aint no hurry. The world warn't made in a day."

Seeing Tony on his break-neck race, he called out, "Hello, sonny, wher be yer goin'?"

"Goin' ter the pic," answered Tony, who believed in all the abbreviations possible.

"Yer be, eh? Wal, neow, that ere's clever. So be I. But, sonny, don't run so tarnation hard; yer wont have no wind left. La sakes, thar aint no hurry."

Tony, who was already far away in the distance, paid no attention, but hurried along, and reached the farm-house just as the family were sitting down to breakfast.

Maud, too much excited to eat, paid flying visits to the kitchen, to be sure that every thing would be in

readiness, giving but little attention to grandma's repeated injunctions to make a hearty breakfast, as she would be very hungry before any preparations could be made for luncheon. The merry flashes from Fannie's eyes promised mischief, and indicated that she, at least, meant to have a good time.

"Well, Nell!" she exclaimed, with a provoking smile, "if you and Alice are going to be so demure, you may just as well stay at home; there'll be no fun with you. Maud and I will have it all to ourselves."

"Never fear, Fan," answered Nellie, gently; "Allie and I will have just as much pleasure as you and Maudie, with all your madcap ways. I expect to be kept busy watching you. It wouldn't surprise me in the least to see you both splashing in the lake before you finish your performances."

An amused smile crossed the corners of Alice's mouth as Uncle Ben's hearty "Ha, ha!" broke in upon the good-natured reply which Fannie was about making to her sister's last remark. The youngsters all flocked to the door to ascertain the cause of his merriment, where they found Zeke, in the full tide of his eloquence, expatiating upon the superior excellence of "*them hosses*."

"Hain't I telled you a hundred times them ere horses is ein-a-most as knowin' as human critters? This mornin', when I went fur ter give 'em their breakfast, bless yer heart, they knowed they was a-goin' off on a *scurtion*, an' they 'mos' telled me so:

they bobbed thar tails about, an' they sniffed, an' they laffed right eout, an' flirted like they was a young gal an' a young feller a-courtin'. This ere feller," he continued, giving the near horse a smart slap on his sleek side, "jis teched me on the shoulder, jis ter 'tract my 'tention, yer see, an' he kep his head a-nod-din', an' his lips a-goin, till I nigh heer'd the words a-comin' right eout o' his mouth."

As grandma stood upon the broad piazza, to watch their departure, Nellie approached and said to her, throwing her arms around the old lady's neck,

"Dear grandma, I wish you were going, too ; I can't bear to go and leave you all alone."

"O no, dear," was the cheery reply. "I am too old to go so far. My poor old body would give out before we got half way ; but I like to see young people enjoy themselves, and so I enjoy your pleasure, and it becomes mine. Your bright faces and fresh young voices are very pleasant to me, Nellie, dear."

"O, grandma," said a soft voice, as a slender little hand crept into the wrinkled one which was hanging by her side, "I am afraid you will be lonely ; please let me stay with you."

"No, no, darling," she answered, as she passed her free hand lightly over Alice's long, dark hair ; "that would never do. Don't you know," she added, as she lifted the earnest face, "that Uncle Ben planned this excursion almost entirely for you, because you had never seen the lake ? and what do you think he would

say if you stayed at home to amuse an old woman, when you ought to be off wandering in the woods and rowing on the lake?"

"Why, grandma," she answered, innocently, "I don't think Uncle Ben would mind one bit if I stayed at home to amuse his mother, because, you know, he always likes to see you happy, and I am so afraid you will be lonely," repeated the little pleader. "Wont you, grandma?"

"No, my dear little girl. You know I am used to being alone; but I am never lonely with my Bible and my closet. You know, Allie, dear, the Saviour is always near us, and we need never have a lonely moment. So go, both of you, my darlings, and don't let the thought of grandma make you sad. May you have a happy as well as a merry day!"

"Grandma, what makes you say that?" asked Nellie, smiling. "If we're merry we shall be happy, sha'n't we?"

"Not necessarily, Nellie, by any means. Merriment is a flow of spirits which may be assumed for the occasion, and may cover a very sad heart, while happiness springs first from a firm and unquestioning faith in God, and then from a reasonable and sensible desire to be contented just where God has placed us, and to make the best of all events and circumstances."

"I always think," rejoined Nellie, "when I hear people laugh and talk a great deal, that they must be very happy."

“That is a very natural mistake for you to make, dear—the mistake of a young mind which has had but little experience in the world—a mistake which is often made by people much older than you.”

“Don’t you think people ought always to be cheerful, grandma?” asked Alice.

“Without doubt, my dear; but this excessive gaiety which we sometimes see and hear is not a healthy condition of the mind. It is but a feverish outburst, and, like a glass of sparkling champagne after the effervescence has passed away, it becomes dull and flat. True cheerfulness is calm, serene, and undisturbed by trifles, because built upon a sure foundation.”

Here Uncle Ben’s sonorous “All aboard!” summoned them from grandma’s side to join the pleasure-seekers, and her gentle tones were soon lost in the motley chorus which followed. The stately family carriage, with its shining horses, having received its burden, a long, low farm wagon made its appearance, drawn by a stout span of iron grays, whose powerful proportions proclaimed them also of iron strength, and fully equal to any demand that might be made upon their powers of endurance. Sundry baskets, pails, kettles, etc., eminently suggestive of good cheer, were artistically packed in the hinder part of the wagon in such a manner as to leave abundant room for the cargo of bounding young hearts waiting to be transported thereto.

Tony was placed on guard in the provision department to see that no frisky basket or pail should take it into its demented head to drop out, thus depriving the excursionists of a portion of their sumptuous repast. The four girls were frisked up by Uncle Ben's strong arms and deposited upon a quantity of clean, fresh, sweet-smelling hay, which afforded them a soft and fragrant seat as well as much fun at such a novel mode of transportation.

As Zeke was a factotum who considered himself entitled to have a finger in every pie compounded in that establishment, of course so momentous an occasion as the present could not be allowed to pass without his valuable assistance. He would have considered those aristocratic quadrupeds, upon whose perfections he so eloquently descanted, on the high road to destruction without his protection and fostering care. Uncle Ben mounted the driver's seat beside Zeke, and the cavalcade moved forward amid the flow of merry words and the rippling of joyous laughter.

A brisk, chirruping sound from Uncle Ben gave the horses fresh impetus, and, throwing back their heads, they started at a lively pace.

"Can't afford to spend the cool of the morning dawdling, old fellow," said Uncle Ben, shaking the rein of the farther horse. "Wait till the sun gets up a little higher before you take it easy."

"By Joe!" exclaimed Zeke, as the crack of a rifle

fell on his ear, "somebody's arter the birds airly this mornin'."

"Ah, ha! after the woodcock, are they? Well, we're willing they should have their fun, aren't we?" asked Uncle Ben, turning around and slyly pulling one of Alice's long locks. "We're in pursuit of ours, you know."

"Yes," she replied, "only it seems so cruel to shoot the poor little birds."

"Every body don't feel as you do, Allie, and birds are tender, succulent eating; then the pleasure of shooting goes a long way in its favor."

"I can't see," said Nellie, "what pleasure there can be in harming so innocent a thing as a bird. Poor little, defenseless creatures, they do no harm."

"That's so, Miss Nellie," said Zeke, thoughtfully; but, la sakes, you never used a rifle; you don't know nothin' heow kinder fascinatin' it is."

"Zeke is about half right," said Uncle Ben, smiling; "there is always more or less excitement about these things which, for the time, overcomes our pity for the little feathered creatures that find a home in the forest."

"You are growing poetical, Uncle Ben," said Nellie.

"Yes," he answered. "You didn't know I was a poet, did you, Nellie? I shall surprise you some day with a sonnet to a woodlark, or an elegy on a dead mocking bird."

“Do,” she replied. “I should be delighted to read your poems.”

The dim yellow haze which had enveloped the earth in the early morning, now gradually lifted, and, floating in vapory clouds, sailed far, far away, until it became lost in the blue ether. Their road lay for some miles through an open, level tract of country, over which, as far as the eye could reach, might be seen vast fields of billowy, waving grain, which were already whitened for the harvest, and about to be gathered into the garner. Skirting the road on both sides were tall, noble trees of maple, oak, and horse-chestnut, while a thick undergrowth of alders and the flaunting sumach formed a thick hedge, almost concealing the neat fences which abound in that flourishing part of the Empire State.

Presently they entered a sheltered district, whose numerous trees of umbrageous growth formed almost a forest, so dense was its shade.

A general exclamation of delight burst from the little girls as they entered this grateful retreat from the sun, whose rays were already becoming uncomfortably warm. Even the horses seemed sensible of and grateful for the shade and coolness, as, throwing back their heads, they sniffed the fresh morning air.

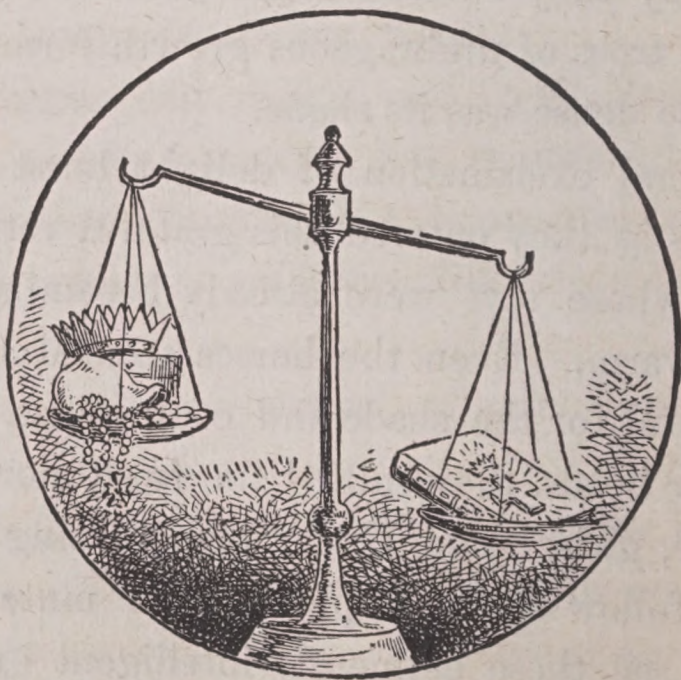
“Come, girls,” said Uncle Ben, turning suddenly round, “follow the example of your mute teachers. Did you see these eminently intelligent quadrupeds fortifying themselves by inhaling long draughts of

this sweet, pure air? Throw back your shoulders and inflate your lungs with nature's tonic. Better than all the drugs and bitters. Isn't that so, Zeke?" he asked, with a mischievous glance behind him.

"Wal, Mr. Ben, I should say as heow 'twas. La sakes, doctor stuff aint worth nothin'. Why, Polly, she was sick, yer know, an' I gin her a hull bottle of them bitters what they sell over ter the store, an', bless yer heart, I thought ther wouldn't ha' bin nothin' left o' her."

"You ought to have given her another bottle, Zeke. Never be stingy to your wife, especially when she's sick."

"Wal, neow, mebbe I had ought ter gin her more. Wal, I'll know better next time, Mister Ben."





CHAPTER XII.

THE peculiar resinous odor exhaled from the pines breathed over each of our little party a sense of rest and refreshment, and almost made them wish to spend the day in their grateful shade and fragrance, rather than to proceed on their projected trip.

“O, Uncle Ben!” exclaimed Fannie, “please let us get out and walk around a little. My limbs have been drawn up at acute angles so long that I don’t believe I shall ever straighten them out. Besides, I want to find some cones. I shall make some astonished picture-frames when I get back to Boston, in commemoration of this delectable place.”

“With all my heart, Fan,” he answered, “if so be the occupants of yonder vehicle agree thereto; but if the pangs of hunger should seize upon them before we overtake them, they may anathematize us in no measured terms. You see, Fan, as we have charge of the commissariat department, they are at our mercy.”

Without waiting for a reply, he raised his hand, trumpet fashion, and shouted,

“Ahoy, there!”

The occupants of the carriage paying no attention, he repeated his call, when Mr. Morrison thrust his head out of the window, and responded,

"Aye, aye, sir."

Uncle Ben walked up to the carriage, and, with a profound bow, said,

"I am the bearer of dispatches from yonder bevy of fair damsels to the occupants of this stately equipage, to ascertain if it be agreeable to them to alight therefrom, and while away some of the precious moments in the search for ferns, cones, and such other productions of a wooded region as romantic young ladies delight in, as well as to inhale the piney aroma of this most odoriferous spot."

"Ha, ha, Ben," laughed Mr. Morrison, "you are a most magniloquent envoy truly. Pity your services could not be secured by the government as Minister to England, or some other foreign power. You would, undoubtedly, settle all disputed questions most amicably, and convince every body that we are the greatest and most invincible nation on this round globe."

"Wouldn't I, though! I should secure for the glorious stars and stripes greater homage and lower obeisances than they ever have received before. I say, Ned, couldn't you manage to publish abroad my extraordinary diplomatic powers?"

"Use your unbounded influence for him, Ned," interrupted Mr. Ormsbee, "and we shall have la belle Parisienne or some dark-eyed senorita for a sister-in-law."

"Never fear, Fred; no dark-eyed foreigners for

me. I select from my own country-women, or not at all. But," he continued, with an astonishing bow, *salam*, rather, to the ladies, "am I to be the bearer of your gracious permission to the young ladies, to revel in cones and ferns to their heart's content?"

"O, Ben!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormsbee, "do come down from your stilts and talk sense. What time is it?"

"It now," he replied, looking at his watch, "lacks two full hours of the sun's meridian."

"Hold on, Ben!" interrupted Mr. Morrison; "I'm struck."

"Struck!" repeated Ben, holding up both hands and advancing a step in a serio-comic manner.

"Yes," replied Mr. Morrison, "I am actually struck with an idea—a most unusual circumstance with me, I assure you. I don't wonder you are horrified, Ben."

"Did ever any one see two such absurdities in the guise of grown men?" asked Mrs. Morrison, laughing heartily in her turn. "Fred is the only sensible one among you."

This shot was too much for Mr. Ormsbee's risibles, and, with a hearty "ha, ha," he exclaimed,

"Now, Annie, you have aroused the lion in his lair. I have been holding back as a sort of reserve in case those two vetarans should run short of ammunition. I will try, however, to keep myself within due bounds."

"Yes, Annie," put in Mrs. Ormsbee, "that was an unlucky hit of yours. There would have been some chance for your peace if you had utterly ignored Fred. As it is, I cannot answer for it. I am glad, however, that he has the grace to acknowledge his peace-destroying proclivities."

"I plead guilty to an act of indiscretion," answered Mrs. Morrison. "I entertain most acute and vivid recollections of sundry inveterate teasings administered by the aforesaid young gentleman in the days when 'he did courting go,' and my gentle sister Mary was the cynosure of his existence."

"O, Annie!" exclaimed the gentleman in question, in deprecating tones, and with a look of mock pleading on his handsome face, "how could you assail my youthful modesty in this most unprecedented manner?"

"Who is grandiloquent now, I wonder?" interrupted Ben. "It is my turn to say, 'Descend from your stilts.' Attend to practicalities now, good people. I, as ambassador, demand an answer forthwith, *pro* or *con*, to the question now pending, 'Shall the young ladies be granted the indulgence they crave, or shall they not?'"

"All this time," said Mr. Morrison, with a most humorous expression of injured innocence, "you have been ignoring the fact of my having been struck, seriously struck, mind you, and my idea is struggling to develop itself into an intelligent expression."

"Out with it, old fellow," said Ben, giving him two or three hearty slaps on the back. "Mayhap it will prove all the more vigorous for its slow and painful development. Give it a fair chance, and it will soon attain its full growth."

"Thank you, Ben. I feel quite equal now to the task of evolving my idea, which, I have no doubt, will prove sufficiently lucid to be grasped by even the intellects of my auditors."

"Hear! hear!" shouted Ben.

"Now, then," proceeded Mr. Morrison, "I propose that the male portion of our most select and delightful party avail themselves of the piscatorial sport promised us by our respected brother-in-law, and draw from the babbling brook, which, he assures us, if my recollection serves me right, is *en route* to the lake, the golden, speckled trout, which will afford so welcome and sumptuous an addition to the bill of fare already provided."

"Capital!" exclaimed Mr. Ormsbee. "Ned, your idea is luminous. Proceed to eliminate it still further, that our dull brains may grasp it in all its bearings."

With a condescending nod and majestic wave of the hand, as if to say, "Interrupt me not," he proceeded:

"The fairer and weaker portion of the party can remain here and follow their proclivities in the way of ferns, cones, etc., while we heroically prepare to

contribute to the delectation of their fastidious palates. The quadrupeds can remain, also, and indulge in the tender, succulent grass, while we exercise our nether extremities in reaching the aforesaid brook, which, if my topography is not at fault, lies within easy distance."

"But, Ned," asked Mrs. Morrison, "shall we have time for all the programme? You know preparing and cooking the fish will consume some time, and we should be sorry to lose our anticipated enjoyment of the lake."

"Plenty of time," he answered, gravely, "always taking into consideration the fact that they have to be caught before they can be subjected to the process of cooking. Even allowing for the flirting propensities of the brilliant little creatures, we hope to capture enough of them to give you ladies a fair opportunity to display your accomplishments in the culinary line."

The three gentlemen, armed with fishing-rods, lines, and hooks, were soon making their way with rapid strides to the brook in whose sparkling waters the little finny tribe were sporting in happy unconsciousness of the impending danger.

Meanwhile the soft summer air was soon ringing with merry voices, whose owners were busily exploring the heart of the lovely sylvan retreat. Lofty deciduous trees of many years' growth cast soft interchanges of light and shade, while evergreens of

trim, cone-like form, lent that charm of variety of which Nature in her landscapes is always so affluent. Parasitic plants of polished leaf and graceful, clinging tendrils festooned many a lordly oak, forming screens of light and delicate tracery, which were now reproduced by the glinting sunlight upon the soft, mossy ground, and now obscured by the closing of the swaying branches.

Poor Tony had been a silent observer of all that was passing, and occasionally his grim visage relaxed into something resembling a smile. Now, however, that they were all released from the restraints imposed upon them by their close riding quarters, and were wandering at will among the thick shrubs and taller trees, his eyes followed Alice with a sort of timid, half-worshiping expression, as though she were a being from a higher sphere. There is in every human heart, however low in the scale of humanity, a respect, an admiration, unconscious, or nearly so, it may be, for that which is pure and lovely. A feeling which, in some natures, it may be, engenders petty jealousies and outward manifestations of dislike, but which after all compels an inward acknowledgment of superiority. Such was the feeling which, unanalyzed, and not at all understood by Tony, was still the mainspring of his unwonted kindness to Alice. Young as he was, and all uncultured and uncouth, her gentleness and purity of character had won him as none other ever could.

It is just as natural in the moral world for like to seek like, for congenial natures to be attracted toward each other, as it is in the physical world for oil to repel water, or the magnet to attract steel, and hence we find this principle constantly exemplified. That subtile, indefinable influence which draws together two persons of corresponding mind and feeling, often in spite of outward incongruities, is one of the most powerful impelling forces of the human mind. Thus we find that, although Maud and Alice still continued the firmest of friends, and Maud would have waged a vigorous war of words in defense of her friend, yet between the latter and Nellie existed a still closer tie by reason of a closer similarity of mind.

Walking leisurely along, the two friends soon discovered a rustic seat, formed by the gnarled trunk of a tree, which afforded ample accommodation for the two slight figures. Sitting here in delicious idleness, enjoying the soft air, laden with its woody perfume, Nellie exclaimed, as she leaned into a crook, which formed a cozy, comfortable resting-place,

“O what a lovely spot for a nap! This soft air makes me sleepy.”

“I am not sleepy,” replied Alice; “but it seems to me that I should like to have such a dream as Jacob had, and see the angels coming and going. O, Nellie, wouldn’t it be nice to go to heaven from here! It is so sweet and quiet.”

"Sh-h," said Nellie, raising her finger; "somebody's coming."

They heard a footstep approaching, crushing in its tread the dried leaves and the dark, moist soil. Soon Tony's awkward form appeared in sight, bearing in his hand a clump of graceful, feathery ferns, of the most tender, delicate green. Approaching Alice with a sheepish look, he extended his offering in the most awkward manner, and, with the single word "here," uttered in his gruffest tone, he began to beat a hasty retreat.

"O, Tony," called Nellie, "where did you get these lovely ferns?"

"Deown thar," he answered, laconically, pointing to an opening in the trees.

"Are there any more there?" she asked.

"Yes, lots on 'em," he replied, with a slight decrease of the coarseness of his usual manner.

Not waiting to hear more, Nellie bounded away in search of her feathery treasures, and was soon out of sight.

"Thank you, Tony, for my ferns," said Alice; "O yes, and for the blackberries. I haven't eaten any of them yet, but they look beautiful. When did you gather them?"

"'S mornin'," answered he, sheepishly, as he stood digging the toe of his well-worn shoe, which he had taken the uttermost pains to make presentable, into the soft soil.

"Tony," asked Alice, as she looked with admiring eyes at the graceful cluster she still held in her hand, "do you know who made these?"

"S'pose they grewed," he answered, venturing to look her in the face an instant.

"They grew, of course; but God made them grow."

Looking at her for a moment, with a puzzled expression, he asked, "Is that ther man wot yer telled me died, cos we was so wicked?"

"Not a man, Tony," she answered, wondering at his total ignorance of things which had been familiar with her from her earliest childhood.

"Not a man," she repeated, slowly and reverentially. "That was the Lord Jesus Christ. He was God and man too."

Here Tony's stolid visage actually brightened with the unaccustomed exercise of thinking, and looking at her with a gleam almost of intelligence in his dull eye, he said,

"Couldn't be two things ter onct."

"I don't know how it is," replied Alice, distressed at her inability to explain a doctrine which has puzzled older and wiser heads than hers ever since the great tragedy was enacted on Calvary. "I can't tell you," she continued, "how it is; but I know it is so, because the Bible says so."

"The Bible? What's that?" asked Tony.

"Why!" answered Alice, becoming more and more shocked, as this little heathen manifested still greater

depths of ignorance, "the Bible is the book that tells us all about God. It is God's book. Did you never see a Bible, Tony?"

"Guess that must 'av been what Mr. Ben gin the ole man; but it hadn't no picters inter it, an' so I didn't care nothin' abeout it."

"O, Tony, I wish you would learn to read it, because it tells us all about Jesus Christ, how he died to save us; and then we know it's true, because God says so. Things that we read in other books may not be true, but we can believe every word of this."

Here was an indorsement from childish lips of every statement which bears the stamp, "Thus saith the Lord." No cavilings, no reasonings, but a simple acceptance of the doctrine of the atonement, because it is set forth in God's word as the one hope of the guilty, the sheet-anchor to which the despairing soul may cling, and never be swept away by the raging billows of temptation.

As Alice was uttering the last sentence, Nellie returned, having found the ferns she sought, and the two were almost immediately joined by Fannie and Maud, who had gathered quite a collection of ferns, cones, and acorns, with the two latter of which they expressed a determination to make the most wonderful fancy articles that their ingenuity could devise.

Nellie, having heard Alice's last remark, turned to Tony, saying,

"Why don't you go to school, Tony, and learn to read?"

"Cos," he replied, shortly.

"But that is no reason," said Fannie.

"Don't you want to go, Tony?" asked Alice.

"Reckon the old man wouldn't let me," he answered, again digging his toes into the ground.

"Why not?" asked Nellie, gently.

"Cos," he answered again.

"But," persisted Fannie, "that is no reason. Why do you think he wouldn't let you go?"

He made no reply, but continued industriously working his toes into the ground, occasionally casting furtive glances at one and another of the group, until Alice said,

"I think your father would let you go, if you asked him, Tony."

"No," he said, quickly, "cos he wants me ter dig taters, an' pick up chips, an',—an' do chores."

"Well, but you could do those things after school," said Fannie.

"Suppose we go and ask him now," suggested Maud, who was always eager to put into execution any idea which seized her at the moment. "I know where he is. I saw him lying down on the grass under a tree just over here."

Without further consultation the four girls started on their mission, Tony following at a laggard pace. If the truth must be told, he had but small literary

ambition, and would much rather, under pretense of digging potatoes, or picking chips, stretch himself at full length on the tall grass, or hide away where the heavy waving grain would shield him from the eyes of those who would summon him to his tasks.

Their ears were soon greeted by the sound of stentorian snoring, and their eyes by the sight of Zeke's lengthy proportions extended upon the ground, the arms thrown up over the head, and an old straw hat drawn down over the eyes. Zeke had an eye for comfort, when he selected his mossy couch, which was soft and fragrant with the breath of many odors, while the branches of a wide-spreading oak afforded ample protection from the bright rays of the sun, which was now approaching its meridian.

The crackling of the dry leaves and twigs under their quick, elastic tread, and the merry sound of fresh young voices, recalled him from dreamland. Tossing off the hat and rising to a sitting posture, he tried to cast off all traces of the close embrace in which Morpheus had so recently held him.

"Well, Zeke," said Fannie, "did you have a good nap?"

"Nap!" answered he, with as much astonishment as he could concentrate into his tone; "O no, Miss Fannie, I haint ben ter sleep."

"Why, Zeke!" exclaimed outspoken Maud, "you must have been asleep, for we heard you snoring ever so far off."

"O no, Miss Maud, that was the wind a-makin' a noise in the trees, kinder sighin', yer know. La sakes! I haint ben ter sleep; I bin kinder speckerlatin'. This is a good place ter speckerlate in, Miss Maud; thar aint no noises to extract yer thoughts."

"What have you been speculating about?" asked Fannie.

"Wal, I ben sorter speckerlatin' abeout the ways of God with us poor critters. Neow, here I am; wonder what he made me fur!"

"Made you to glorify him, and to go to heaven and be happy when you die," answered Maud. "Don't you know what the Catechism says?"

"Yes; but, la sakes! I aint got nothin' to glorify him with. I can't do no good. I aint got no money. More'n I can do ter take care o' myself, an' Polly, an' the youngsters, 'thout tryin' ter do nothin' more."

"Well," said Maud, "I've heard papa say that we glorify God just in that way, by doing our every-day duties well and faithfully, just because that is what he means for us to do. Papa says that we needn't try to do any great things that we really haven't the means for; but that if we do the smallest and meanest things, because then that is what God has given us to do, and do them to please him, that is all he expects of us."

"Wal, I never thought o' that afore, Miss Maud. I allus thought I couldn't do nothin', 'cause I'm so poor, an' aint got nothin' ter do with. I thought

glorifyin' God meant ter do some big thing fur him, buildin' a church, or givin' a lot o' money, or some-thin' like that ere."

"Papa would tell you that is all a mistake," replied Maud, earnestly. "I know he would, because I asked him once what it meant, when I was studying my Sunday-school lesson, and that is what he told me."

"Wal, mebbe so," answered Zeke, passing his hand over his furrowed brow with a meditative gesture; "mebbe so. I dunno; I aint very larned in Scripter."

"Now, Zeke," said Nellie, "here is a good chance for you to begin to act on Maud's explanation. We want you to make us a promise. Will you?"

"Make yer a promise, Miss Nellie? Sartain I will ef I kin."

"Well, you can, and if you promise what we want you to it may be the beginning of great good. Zeke, will you let Tony go to school and learn to read?"

"La sakes, now, Miss Nellie! You don't say as how that's what yer goin' fer ter ax me. Heow kin I spare the critter? Yer see, Miss Nellie, I want him fer ter do the chores."

"O, well," answered Nellie, "he can go to school, and do the chores afterward. Plenty of time after school hours for that."

"I don't see heow I kin afford ter let him go," said Zeke, vainly trying to conceal the satisfaction which twinkled in his eyes. The fact was, his pride

was gratified beyond measure by the interest which these city girls manifested in his boy; for were they not the nieces of his employer? and Zeke held Uncle Ben in the highest respect and reverence. This mask of unwillingness was drawn on to conceal the real pleasure which this simple act of kindness had awakened in his breast. He was like a great many others of the human family who take infinite pains to hide under the veil of indifference, sometimes couching in terms of strong disapprobation, feelings whose manifestation would do them credit.

"Afford it!" exclaimed Maud, quickly, in reply to Zeke's remark. "Why, it wont cost you any thing. He can go to the district school."

"Deestric school! Wal, yes," he continued, scratching his head, as though in the endeavor to arouse the dormant ideas. "He might go ter the deestric school, but, la sakes, Miss Maud, 'twouldn't be no use, my eddication haint done nothin' for me. My old mother, she was detarmined I shud be eddicated, but all my larnin' haint never done me no good. Yer see whar I be neow, and I'd be jist as well off ef I didn't kneow nothin'."

"But, Zeke," put in Alice, "if Tony went to school, he could learn to read about things that we have been talking of, how to glorify God and grow up to be a good man, and go to heaven when he dies."

"Yes, yes, Miss Alice, but 'taint every man as hes

book learnin' that ever larns them things. Howsum-ever, I dunno, but I'd jist as lief he'd go, on'y what 'ill Mr. Ben say about it. You know we're a-workin' for him, Tony an' me is."

"O Uncle Ben is willing, and here he comes to speak for himself," exclaimed Maud, as the three gentlemen appeared in sight, each one bearing the trophies of his piscatorial conquest, achieved in the short space of two hours. Uncle Ben, upon being appealed to, readily granted his consent, so that the whole weighty matter was speedily decided in the affirmative, the vote being unanimous. The only dissenting voice, that of Zeke, had been induced to concur with the majority, a concession which, in his heart, he was only too ready to make.

The whole party immediately instituted a search for the ladies, who were soon found, to whom the fifty or more shining little captives were triumphantly displayed.

"Now," said Ben, "we've earned our dinner. If I was never hungry in my life before, I am unmistakably so now, and I want to enjoy my prize. Come, all hands! Let's have a fire. Here, Tony! Where is the young scapegrace?" he asked, looking in all directions.

The woods were soon ringing with shouts of "Tony! Tony!" A chorus of voices, from the deep, stentorian base of Ben and his associates, to the clear soprano of Nellie and Alice, called in vain. No

Tony appeared, that young gentleman having taken himself off, during the discussion which terminated in the decision that he should commence the ascent of the hill of knowledge, and ultimately pluck the intellectual fruits which crown its summit. He now lay at full length, upon the ground, behind a clump of alders which effectually screened him from observation on one side, but he was in actual dread lest some of the four pairs of busy young feet should stray around to the other side, which was utterly unprotected from the inquiring eye. He knew that the woods were vocal with his name, but he paid no attention, and, as the sound died away, he fell into a deep slumber.

Finding Tony unavailable, they bestirred themselves, and soon collected a huge pile of fagots and dry leaves, which was soon kindled into a merry sparkling, crackling blaze, sufficient to prepare an entertainment for a much larger party.

"These ere fish owes you a grudge, Mr. Ben," said Zeke, as he proceeded with the work of preparing them for cooking. "They owes you a grudge fer takin' of 'em out o' the cool water."

"Then you think they wont like spluttering in the fire, eh, Zeke?"

"Why, no. La sakes, these critters likes water better'n fire, a great sight, an' ef they could talk, they'd make yer understand it. Neow yer kin take my word fer it."

"Why, Zeke, isn't one element as good as another?" asked Ben, with a quick glance behind him, where Mr. Morrison was reclining, engaged in smoking a segar. He might have been in better business.

"Wal, ye'd better jest try it, that's all I've got ter say, an' see ef yer like to be a sizzlin' over the fire as well as ter be splashin' in the creek ter hum. That's all I've got ter say."

"Why, Zeke," said Mr. Morrison, puffing away, "fire is a mighty comfortable thing, and you know the Bible tells us it is a purifier as well. It speaks of having the gold of our hearts purified by fire, until all the dross is consumed, and only the pure gold remains."

"Wal, I dunno nothin' about that, but yer don't want ter hold yer hand inter it mor'n an hour, I reckon; ef yer did, yer'd be a bigger fool'n I take yer to be. That's all I got ter say."

Having finished the fish, he shambled off in pursuit of a frying-pan, and having deposited them therein and placed them on a fine bed of coals awaiting their reception, they were soon "sizzlin'" over the element he so much depreciated. A snowy cloth was spread upon the ground, laden with such delicacies as might have tempted appetites much more fastidious than were theirs. Indeed, they were all in good condition to enjoy grandma's sandwiches, roast chickens, cold meats, golden custards, and de-

licious pies and cakes, to say nothing of the feast provided by Uncle Ben and his compeers. A tea-kettle was among the articles with which they had provided themselves, and was now hissing upon the coals, while cups of the refreshing beverage were distributed to those who were addicted to its use. A merry party gathered, and, seated on the soft moss, a spirit of innocent enjoyment was rife among the elders as well as among the juvenile members of it. The bright joyous sunshine glinted among the quivering leaves in the tree-tops above their heads, casting a quaint and graceful tracing upon faces and figures, as well as over the shining damask upon which lay the plentiful repast.

Zeke, having seated himself at a respectful distance, was soon bountifully supplied, when Maud, having discovered that Tony was still missing, gave the initiatory to another peal of voices which resounded until the "dim woods rang."

Tony had by this time awaked from his nap, and being sensible that he was sought for, as well as urged by very decided gnawings of hunger, thought best to render himself visible to mortal sight. Then, too, the thought presented itself to his mind, that if he persisted in remaining a recluse, they might possibly give up the search for him, and pursue the remainder of their trip without his valuable society. The idea of spending a night in the woods did not present a pleasant prospect. Bears, wolves, and all

forms of hobgoblins, of which his very limited knowledge gave him any dread, were present to his, at other times, sluggish imagination; so, all things considered, he drew together his loose joints, and giving his pants a hitch, he was soon in the presence of the assembled group.

"Well, Tony," said Ben, in a tone of good-natured raillery, "we thought you had become food for the birds by this time."

"No danger," said Zeke, "birds likes sweet morsels, birds does. You wont cotch them a eatin' nothin' wot aint sweet an tender, Mr. Ben. But whar yer bin, sonnie? Aint seen nothin' o' yer this long time."

Tony stood in his favorite attitude, his eyes cast down, fingers in his mouth, digging his toes into the ground—literally into the ground this time, for by industrious digging or boring, or by whatever name he chose to dignify his occupation, he had made an aperture through which his toes sought contact with the element upon which he stood.

"Of course, Tony," rejoined Ben, with his teasing manner, "you don't require any food. You and the birds have been having a banquet. Most probably feasting on the wing of a musquito, or the leg of a fly. With which delicate morsel have you regaled yourself?"

"O, Ben!" exclaimed Mrs. Morrison, "you are too ridiculous. Do give the child something to eat, and

be quick about it, too, or we shall have no time for the lake."

"Never fear, Annie," he answered; "the lake will keep, depend upon it. Wouldn't run away from such illustrious visitors on any consideration. Couldn't hire it to miss such a pleasure as receiving us upon its broad bosom. Now, Tony, fall too. Never mind chewing the bones, they will aid digestion."

The remains of the feast were soon collected, the utensils employed in its preparation packed, seats resumed, and our friends were again on their way. The open fields, across which sunlight and shadow quickly followed each other, were smiling around them, while their route lay along a sheltered road over-arched by thick shade-trees, through whose clustering foliage the sun scintillated little patches and flecks of gold, glorifying every object upon which it rested.

Far away between them and the eastern horizon rose bank after bank of graceful, undulating hills, the purple haze which rested upon their summits giving an indescribable charm of variety to the lively landscape which lay stretched out before them. Through mile after mile of this peaceful, quiet country they drove until, at last, the blue waters of the lake burst upon their quickly fascinated gaze.



CHAPTER XIII.

“**H**ERE they come! Here they come!” exclaimed Maud, as she stood on the broad piazza of the hotel, awaiting the appearance of the little craft which her father and uncle had gone to procure. A neat, trim little yacht was lying at the landing with the national colors floating on the wind and streamers and ribbons flying. Uncle Ben was standing on the dock, waving his hat, his chestnut curls in becoming disorder, his blue eyes twinkling with the spirit of mischief; altogether forming a picture which was not quickly forgotten by his companions. They were all soon comfortably disposed of, the boat loosened from its moorings, and the long anticipated part of the day’s pleasure commenced.

“O, see!” exclaimed Maud, looking around her in an ecstasy of delighted wonder, and dipping her hand over the side of the boat. “See, how blue the water is. Is it blue all the way down to the bottom, papa?”

“No,” answered Mr. Morrison. “If you were to dip up a glass full of the water you would find it colorless, as water always is in its pure state.”

“What makes it blue, then?” she asked, with persistent curiosity.

“Wal, neow, Miss Maud,” interrupted Zeke, “do yer spect yer par ter answer all them thar questions? Why don’t yer ax im why the sky is blue, an’ the leaves is green, an’ the flowers all sorts o’ colors. I reckon it’s cos the Lord, he knowed best, an’ he made ’em so.”

“Zeke is about right,” laughed Mr. Morrison. “Still, Maudie, the Lord never does any thing without a good reason, and there are reasons for every thing he has done. Forms and coloring are all the result of certain fixed rules. If we were to go through the whole category of nature we should find nothing at hap-hazard, but every thing nicely adjusted to the place which he designed it to fill, and all eminently adapted to our use, comfort, or pleasure, as the case might be.”

“Then, papa, why *is* the sky blue? Is it because it is such a lovely color?”

“Not that alone, although I believe that the love of the beautiful must constitute a large element in the Infinite Mind, since such exquisite hues and forms are the result of his handiwork. There is really no sky, Maudie; but that vault or dome over our heads, which we call by that name, is merely the atmosphere to which distance lends the beautiful blue tinge which we sometimes call azure.”

“But isn’t it really blue?” she asked, in amazement.

“No,” was the smiling reply. “If we were float-

ing up there we should find the air, as it is here, without color."

"Is that the reason," asked Alice, "that the tops and sides of mountains look so bluish when they are far off?"

"What do you know about mountains looking blue?" asked Ben, in his teasing tone.

"O," she replied, quickly, "I went once with papa and mamma to the White Mountains, and they used to look bluish, and sometimes kind of purplish. Papa used to say there was a purple haze resting on the mountain. Sometimes at sunset there would be yellow and red, and sometimes a greenish light."

"Yes," answered Mr. Morrison, "that was the concentrated glory of the sun's rays shining through the clouds reflected upon the mountain."

"How far off are the clouds?" asked Alice.

"Well," he replied, considering a moment, "I believe they are estimated in fine weather to be four or five miles above our heads, but I think their average distance is from a mile and a half to two miles."

"Papa," said Maud, "you have not satisfied me yet about colors. Why are leaves green and roses red?"

"O, Uncle Ned," exclaimed Nellie, "excuse me, but may I see if I can remember what I read about that?"

"Certainly," he replied, smiling. "Go on, Nell, we shall all be highly edified to hear your solution of Maud's difficulty."

"Well, let me see," she proceeded, thoughtfully, "it said—the book I mean—"

"Be careful, Nell," interrupted Ben, "only scientific reasons remember. No nonsense. This cultivated audience will accept no theories except such as are based upon the strictest principles of science."

"Very well, Uncle Ben," was the good-natured rejoinder, "I shall depend upon you to act as critic. It shall be your office to decide whether or not my theories are based upon scientific principles."

"Ahem! I accept the office. Proceed, if you please."

Half rising, he announced, "A lecture will now be delivered by Professor Nellie Ormsbee on—I beg pardon—what is the subject?"

"Now, Mr. Ben," interrupted Zeke, "that ar aint fair. Ye'd orter bin posted afore yer give eout a lectur."

"That's so, Zeke, I plead guilty." Then laying his hand upon his heart with a profound bow, he resumed: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have recovered my recollection. The fair lecturer's subject is—is—light? or color?" he asked, assuming an appearance of intense embarrassment.

He seated himself amid a roar of laughter, at the subsidence of which Mr. Morrison said,

"Now, Nellie, I move that you proceed. Never mind Ben's saucy interference."

"O," she replied, laughing, "I don't mind Uncle

Ben ; he's bound to pay attention, because he is to be called upon for a criticism. Well, I think I read—remember, Uncle Ben, you are to criticise the book, not me. I think it said that a ray of light is composed of all colors of the rainbow, and that some things reflect one color and some another.”

“Good!” interrupted Ben, clapping vigorously.

“Stop,” she cried, raising her hand, “I am not through yet.”

Vociferous cheering, and cries of “Go on, go on!” hindered her for a moment, after which she proceeded :

“The reason that leaves are green is because they possess a peculiar property which causes them to absorb the red rays and reflect the blue and yellow ones, which produce green. The rose is red because it absorbs the blue and yellow rays and reflects only the red.”

As she ceased Ben hopped up, exclaiming,

“Bravo ! Have I permission to criticise now ? ”

“Yes,” she answered ; “I have finished.”

Assuming a comic expression, which purported to be an unbounded and pompous confidence in his own knowledge, combined with an embarrassing doubt of the right of a critic to elicit further proof of a lecturer's capabilities by questioning, he asked,

“Does it lie within my province to catechise our friend upon this most interesting subject ? ”

“Without doubt,” replied Mr. Morrison, “the young

lady will prove equal to any emergency; I will vouch for it."

"Very well, then," rejoined Ben, again bowing, with his hand upon his heart; perhaps she will inform us why a violet is blue."

"I believe," she replied, laughing, "that the violet is blue because it absorbs the red and yellow rays and reflects only the blue."

"But why," he asked, winking slyly at Mrs. Morrison, as if to say, "Now I've caught you," "why does not every thing either absorb or reflect the same rays, or, in other words, why is not every thing the same color?"

"I think it is because their surfaces are different," she replied, with unruffled composure.

"Bravo again!" he cried. "Ladies and gentlemen, our fair lecturer has acquitted herself admirably. That's the proper thing to say, isn't it?" he whispered to Mrs. Morrison, who was seated next him. Then he continued in a loud voice, "She has proven her intimate and thorough acquaintance with the subject under consideration, and merits our most sincere and hearty thanks. I move that we tender her a vote expressive of the same," and, suiting the action to the word, he led a round of three times three hearty cheers, whose echoes rang over the clear water.

"How funny!" exclaimed Maud. "How do people know all these things, papa?"

"Well," he answered, "men whom we call scien-

tists, or men who have studied into these things, have evolved or brought out such facts by experiments, and have reduced their knowledge to certain laws or rules which we call science."

"It all seems so strange," said Alice, in a musing tone.

"Not strange, Allie dear, when we remember that all these things work in harmony with Nature's laws, and that Nature's laws are God's laws, and Nature itself is but an exponent or expression of the qualities which combine with beauty and utility in the Divine Mind. You do not understand it, my dear child, and yet the fact stands as plainly demonstrated as does the other fact, that when you open your box of water-colors at home, and mingle Prussian blue and gamboge, you have green of any shade you wish to make by the addition of more or less of either ingredient, as also that your Prussian blue and lake will in the same manner produce purple."

"I understand that because I see it," she answered, laughing, "and I know just how it is done."

"Yes," he replied, "that is just like our poor weak humanity. We believe those things which we see, but are willing to take very little upon trust. In regard to Maud's question about the water, the same great facts have been evolved. The ocean, as well as the land, is his handiwork, and is subject to certain great fixed laws. Absorption, reflection, and refraction are the natural causes, or those which God

employs, and which are mainly explanatory of its different appearances. The water which we pour into our glasses and find so refreshing, so cooling to the parched mouth and throat, is absolutely colorless, but taken in a much larger quantity, and in a less pure state, and being subject to the laws of which I have spoken, we find it here to be of a beautiful blue, while if we were to go out on mid-ocean it would appear of a deep green."

"O, yes," interrupted Maud, "that must be what they call sea-green; isn't it, papa?"

"Exactly," answered her father, smiling.

"Wal, neow, Miss Maud," said Zeke, "when I axed yer why yer didn't ax yer par all them thar questions, I thought as heow I'd gin yer a stumper. I 'spected thar warn't no reason, on'y 'cept cos it was. I didn't know't larnin' went so fur as ter find eout heow God made thin's. I kinder 'spected 't nobody didn't know that ar."

"Why, Zeke, said Ben, earnestly, "God didn't put us into this world blindfolded. He endowed us with these faculties which we possess, the very nature of which is to look into the why and wherefore of things around us; and there can be nothing sinful in the investigation, as long as we are satisfied with our legitimate knowledge, and are careful not to inquire into those things which he has hidden from our eyes."

"Mebbe so, Mister Ben, mebbe so. I aint larn'd in these things; on'y I kinder thought as heow 'twas

'nough that God made 'em so. That ar's reason 'nough for me, any heow."

"So it is, Zeke, if we have no means of study; but if God grants us the advantages of education, it is right for us to employ them in such a way as will give us the most knowledge of him and his works, and as will do the greatest amount of good to the human family. You do not hesitate to make yourself familiar with the haunts and habits of such of his creatures as come within the range of your rifle or your fishing-rod. Why do you seek to inquire about them? Why not let them go according to their nature? Surely God made them as well as the rays of light or yonder rolling sun. If guilt there be, surely yours must be the greater, because you seek to destroy the life which none but he can give, while we only desire to make ourselves familiar with the mechanism of his created works."

"Wal, Mister Ben, I 'spect you're right. I can't argy the pint."

"I've seen you," resumed Ben, ignoring the last remark, "lying for hours by the side of a stream watching the fishes sporting therein, or flat on your back motionless, taking in every motion of the birds and squirrels, until presently a crack from your rifle would bring the innocent victim lifeless at your feet. God gave them those haunts and those habits, and, according to your theory, you have no right to interfere with them."

"Wal, ter tell yer the truth, Polly she used ter pick at me fur ter git sunthin' ter eat, an' that was jist abeout the easiest way ter do it, an' so I used ter watch the critters, an' sometimes I cotched 'em, an' sometimes I didn't; an' I used ter lay thar, as yer sed you seed me, till it got purty nigh dinner time, an' then I flew areound purty lively, cos I knowed Polly, she'd scold like blazes ef I didn't take nothin' home."

"There is one truth, Zeke, which we may always bear in mind, which is this: we need never be afraid of knowing too much of God or of his works in the natural world, so long as we do not attempt to take him to task for his dealings with us. Every thing he does is so perfectly done that it will bear our human investigation and imitation. So long as we recognize every thing—our own experiences included, whether pleasant or painful—as coming from the hand of a gracious Father, we are on the safe side, depend upon it. Knowledge of his works leads to knowledge of him, and knowledge of him leads to a higher and purer manhood."

"I s'pose so," yawned Zeke; "but I'm dreadful consarvative in my 'pinions. I don't b'lieve in no new-fangled hifalutin notions."

"Uncle Ben," said Fannie, suddenly, "I wish you would take me to Europe. I want to see the blue Mediterranean. I have read so much about it."

"All right, Fan," said her father. "When Uncle Ned gets him a position as Minister to some foreign

court you shall go with him, and be introduced as the niece of our illustrious Minister—Hon. Benjamin Rodman!”

“What *do* you mean, papa?” asked his ambitious daughter, her eyes wide open with ungratified curiosity.

“Now, Fred,” said his wife, “you have created a tempest in a tea-pot. All these young people will be on the *qui vive*, taking it all for a solemn fact. It is nothing, Fan,” she added, “nothing but some of papa and Uncle Ben’s fun.”

“I’ll tell you, Fan,” said Uncle Ben, “these people are trying to make me marry some foreign princess. When I do you shall go along, and be presented at court.”

“O, what nonsense,” replied Fannie, with a sudden accession of dignity. “If I never go till then, I may as well make up my mind to stay at home.”

“That is the best thing to do,” said her father, “make up your mind to accept whatever is sent to you. There is the secret of happiness, Fan,” he added, laying his hand upon her shoulder, emphatically.

“Yes,” said Zeke, dryly, “even ter a scoldin’ wife or a drunken husban’.”

“That’s it, Zeke,” said Uncle Ben, “for better or for worse. You and I know all about it, don’t we?”

“Yes, yes, Mister Ben; but sometimes it’s all wus an’ no better, an’ that’s most times, I reckon.”

"Make it better, then, man, make it better," answered Ben, in hearty tones. "There never was any thing so bad yet that it couldn't be improved."

"Dunno, Mister Ben, dunno, my ole woman don't grow no better from one year's end ter t'other. She scolds jist as hard, n' harder every year, Polly does."

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oorsels as ithers see us!"

quoted Ben. Then he added, seriously, "Zeke, do you ever look in the glass?"

"Look in the glass!" repeated Zeke. "Wal, Mr. Ben, we ain't got no very scrumptious glass for ter look inter. Nothin' but a little cracked, zig-zag piece 'll cut your face all up inter little patches, but I reckon I wouldn't see nothin' very splendacious ef I did. But what in natur's that ar got ter do with it?"

"Much, Zeke. I was thinking that, perhaps, if you could see yourself as Polly sees you, it might mend her scolding ways a little. Did you ever think it may not be all Polly's fault, Zeke? It's just possible, you know, that you may act in such a way as to make her scold."

"La sakes! I aint never thought nothin' about that ar; but then, that aint it. La sakes alive! I'm jist as good to her 's I kin be, but it's her natur; she loves ter scold, Polly does."

"Suppose you try her on a different tack. Sum-

mon up a little more energy, and provide for her better than you do ; get her a more comfortable place to live in than that old tumble-down cabin, and then see if she isn't a different woman."

"Easier to say than to do, Mister Ben, a great deal. La sakes ! I can't do no more'n I am a-doin'. I'm nigh worked off o' my legs a'ready."

This last assertion might have borne some semblance of truth to a stranger, if he observed the aimless, shambling, almost imbecile manner in which those appendages were propelled by their indolent, incompetent possessor.

One would imagine that the knowledge that a person bears the image of God would prove a sufficiently powerful motive to preserve intact the lineaments stamped upon him by the great Creator. In proportion as a man's moral nature becomes sunk in ignorance or vice does he lose the resemblance to "Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." It would be difficult to trace the divine likeness in the dirty, bloated, besotted victim of intemperance or crime, or even in the slatternly appearance and marred visage of him whom indolence and neglect have sunk to the level of the beasts. But mark the pure in heart,—in the erect form and noble brow of this loyal son, it is comparatively easy to catch the reflection of the Father's face. It is this reflex influence which sheds its rays of hope and cheer over a circle of almost limitless extent.

We do not mean, by this, to imply that Zeke was addicted to any great or heinous crime, but he certainly presents an exemplification of the waste and prostitution of powers which ought and might have been employed in the improvement of his own condition, in providing for those for whose welfare he was held responsible by his Maker, and in doing good, according to the measure of his capacity, to those outside of the home circle. His mental capacities we have tested to some extent, and have found them extremely limited; but even his physical powers had, by his intolerable indolence, been allowed to become almost dormant, until his wife was an overworked household drudge, and his children were growing up around him in deplorable sloth and ignorance.

The boat had been scudding along before a light breeze over the sapphire bosom of the lake, calm and unruffled as the summer sky above their heads. Low, slanting beams from the gorgeous orb of day betokened his downward march, and as though parting with lingering fondness from so fair a scene, he cast upon the surface of the water a golden glow in which lake and sky were suffused with glory. After the great glowing ball had dipped below the horizon, and the shades of night were rapidly gathering around them, Mr. Morrison exclaimed, looking at his watch, "Well, good people all, it is nearly seven o'clock! Is it not time that we were homeward bound?"

Suppose we tack about and commence our return voyage?"

As he spoke the great, round, harvest moon, full-orbed and silvery, burst out upon them with a blaze of light which almost rivaled that of the day just departed.

"O," exclaimed Nellie, as she observed the moon's shining track upon the water and the murky darkness of that which lay in shadow, "what a gloomy thing it must be to be drowned! The water looks so dark and cold."

"Yes, Nellie dear," answered Mrs. Morrison, gently. "But His presence can cast cheering beams upon the soul even there. It is all the same if we are in the hollow of his hand, where he has promised to hold us; the bottom of the heaving ocean, or our own peaceful beds, will prove an equally safe transfer to his bosom."

"Yes," answered Ben, thoughtfully, "there is no fear nor lack to those who trust him. Fire and flood, which naturally possess, perhaps, equal terrors, are alike powerless to harm the believer."

"Isn't it delightful," said Mrs. Ormsbee, "to realize that there is, or need be, absolutely no fear to the tried and trusting soul!"

Ben sat in silence a moment, when he appeared lost in thought, after which his sonorous tones burst into the familiar hymn, so dear to many hearts, "Homeward Bound," which was soon taken up by every

voice, and its stirring refrain was soon ringing on the clear evening breeze.

As those triumphant words sunk into their hearts they were a happy, if a subdued rather than a merry, party. The harp strings had been touched by other hands than theirs. Each heart was full, and was vibrating in harmony with their thrilling chords. Did a spirit of prophecy hover over that thoughtful group, or was it merely the effect of the hour and the scene? Who can tell?

They reached the landing just as the last notes died away, and the debarking was effected almost in silence. The slight fatigue which they all experienced probably contributed toward a quietude which was undoubtedly enhanced by the mellow lunar rays which were beaming upon them in unclouded brilliancy, and the younger portion of the party, at least, were less loquacious than in the early part of the day.

They drove along the same lovely road over which they had traveled in the morning, until within a few miles of home, when Zeke started up, exclaiming,

“Hello! Thar’s a fire! I be whipped ef I don’t b’lieve it’s the ole shanty a burnin’.”

So absorbed had they been, each in his own thoughts, that they had not observed that the heavens were fast becoming tinged with a glowing light which, but for the lateness of the hour, might have been mistaken for the setting sun, until Zeke’s

startled exclamation drew their attention to the direction in which he pointed. Sure enough! There was no mistaking the lurid glare which burst upon them as they drew nearer, throwing the moon into comparative obscurity, and looking against the blue background of the sky, like a huge bonfire, now dying away, and now bursting out again into jets of flame.

They made all haste to reach the scene of the disaster, when Ben, with his usual prompt energy, called upon his two brothers-in-law to drive each a vehicle home, with the ladies and children, as also to see that provision was made for the reception of the unfortunate inmates of the burning house. His request was quickly complied with, and he immediately took measures to extinguish the flames, if such a thing were indeed possible. There was nothing in the tenement worth much effort to save, with the exception of the human beings, whose terrified screams could be distinctly heard above the roaring and crackling of the devouring element.

Zeke was almost paralyzed with terror, his long, limp limbs shaking as in an ague fit. Assuming a sternness which he did not feel, but knew to be the only means of arousing the trembling wretch to exertion, Ben ordered him, in commanding tones, to procure some buckets of water and dash upon the fire, while he himself entered the burning dwelling, and with almost superhuman effort, extricated Polly and

her brood, the former somewhat, but not seriously burned, and the latter more or less singed, but all shrieking and crying at the top of their shrill voices.

“O! O!” exclaimed Polly, with frantic gestures; “my sister and Lou. O, save them! save them!” and then the strain upon her nerves gave way, and she fell upon the wet grass in a dead swoon. By this time Mr. Morrison and Mr. Ormsbee returned to the scene of action with a farm wagon, into which the insensible woman and her little ones were lifted and transported to Rodman Farm.

Several sturdy men from the neighboring farms had reached the spot, and as so unusual an occurrence in that quiet place had aroused every body within sight and sound, quite a concourse had already assembled, some of whom stood idly by with their hands in their pockets, lazily gaping at the frightful, yet exciting scene, while others, with good intentions, but illy-directed efforts, accomplished but little.

Ben quickly seized a ladder and planted it against the eaves of the house, at an angle where the flames were less fierce than in the front. Entering the house, he forced his way amid the burning half-charred wreck, almost blinded and choked by the smoke and severely scorched by the flames, until hearing from overhead the despairing wails of Mrs. Wentworth and her daughter, he called to them hoarsely to go to the window, and, stepping out in

full view, he tried to cheer and encourage them, hoping to be able to save them, by bidding them jump out, promising to catch them in his arms if they would but venture.

But, alas! this was a forlorn hope. He had not thought of the size of the window, which was found to be so small as scarcely to admit of the egress of a small child, while the half-frantic creatures were too dazed and stupefied to heed his instructions, even if compliance had been practicable.

He re-entered the house, with the intention of ascending to the upper story, and if possible rescuing the poor perishing victims; but finding the rough, ladder-like stairs, which had sufficed for the unambitious occupants to reach the loft above, were enveloped in flames, and so much burned as to be incapable of sustaining his weight, he immediately sought the aid of the friendly ladder outside, and began rapidly to scale it, in the hope of forcing an entrance.

“O, Mister Ben!” exclaimed a sturdy farmer, who stood idly gazing at the scene, but without volunteering the slightest assistance, “you’re surely not agoin’ to try to git in there? You can’t save them, an’ you’ll lose your own life. Don’t go, Mr. Ben. You can’t do no good.”

“Are you a *man*?” asked Ben, in withering tones, his blue eyes flashing indignantly, “and refuse to put forth an effort to save a perishing woman and her child!” And, turning away with a look of fixed

determination in his face, he persisted in ascending notwithstanding the united entreaties of the by-standers that he would desist.

"Better not venture! You'll never come out alive," shouted a voice from the crowd.

"Very well," answered Ben, in firm, but kind tones. "The will of the Lord be done. I can go to heaven just as well from a burning house as anywhere else," and, with a vigorous hand, he pulled out the narrow casement, and wrenching away the burning frame-work which blistered his hands at every touch, he forced himself through the aperture which he thereby enlarged, and, seizing the trembling and half-fainting woman, he bore her to the window.

"Bring a bed!" he shouted, "and stand by some of you to break her fall;" and, carefully passing her, dropped her right into the arms of the man who had quaked under his withering rebuke. To dispose of Lou in the same manner was but the work of a moment, and as the window was but a few feet from the ground, they were unhurt by the fall, although somewhat badly burned. There now seemed to Ben no way of escape for himself. The walls were falling, and he had snatched Lou just as the floor was trembling beneath her feet. Having saved others, himself he could not save. He had exerted himself to the utmost, and now his energies were beginning to fail. His limbs were numb and well-nigh powerless; his head swam, and, committing his soul to the God

who gave it, and in whose spirit he had so faithfully worked, he was about to yield himself to the weariness and torpor which made death appear inevitable, when the thought of his mother recalled him to life and quickened his sinking powers. He determined to make one more effort to save himself, and, tottering toward the now fast-crumbling wall, he made a plunge and went—he knew not whither. Hearts which had selfishly shrunk with trembling dread from encountering danger, perhaps death, and hands which had been helplessly withheld, were now quickly and readily extended for the assistance of him who had risked his life in the noble effort to save two helpless fellow-creatures from the jaws of the devouring monster.

A rude litter was speedily prepared, on which the insentient clod was tenderly and reverently laid, and with slow and mournful steps borne back to the home from whence he had so merrily departed but a few hours before. A careful examination showed that life was not extinct, but that he had sustained injuries which, in all human probability, would terminate his existence in a few days. A concussion of the brain had been produced by striking, in his fall, a huge rock, against which his head had lain when he was removed from the ruins. Internal injuries had been received, as the physicians supposed, by swallowing the flames, in which he had been completely enveloped. He lay in a heavy stupor, from

which Dr. Anderson warned his friends he might never rally.

Here was the test of the Christian virtues which, in Grandma Rodman, had shone so brilliantly. Here was the darling son, on whom she had leaned in all her trials, the stay of her fast-declining days, leveled by a sudden blow of the destroyer. The human heart, in the bitterness of its anguish, is sometimes disposed to question the dealings of the hand by which it is bereaved. "Why!" she might have exclaimed, in the intensity of her grief, "O! why was he smitten in the glory of his manhood, while I, a leafless trunk, whose boughs are sunken and sapless, remain to cumber the soil! I have served my generation, and weary and footsore, long for the promised rest, while he was strong and vigorous and girded to run the race even to its utmost limit." Yet no such words passed her quivering lips, but bowing to the dread behest in speechless agony, she never left the side of her unconscious son. The other members of the family were too much absorbed in grief to heed the harsh and fretful words to which they were constantly exposed by Lou. No feeling of gratitude toward him to whom she owed her deliverance from a fearful death, and whose life was the forfeit; no sympathy for the agonized family to whose hospitality she was indebted for food and shelter, deterred her in the slightest degree from the most querulous and bitter complainings. She de-

clared she would not remain in the house with that proud Maud Morrison, and that hateful thing they all made such a fuss over.

But rave and scold as she would, a week passed before she could relieve them of her presence. Mrs. Wentworth was so much prostrated by nervous exhaustion as to be unable to rise from her bed, and Lou's fretful complainings did not, by any means, accelerate her recovery.

The heavy stupor in which Uncle Ben lay lasted in unbroken measure until the third day, when he opened his eyes, and feebly pressing with his cold fingers the hand which clasped his own, faintly articulated, "Dear mother! Jesus is here—all—is—peace." He could say no more. That stupor which was the forerunner of the approach of the last enemy, whose Conqueror was close at hand to enable his faithful follower to triumph even as he had triumphed, again overcame him. His mind wandered slightly for a few moments, when, after an interval of silence, during which it seemed as though the glorified spirit had already entered into the ineffable brightness of the Saviour's presence, he rallied for a moment, opened his eyes with a look of clear intelligence in their blue depths, as his lips formed the simple word, "Alice."

Who can analyze the thoughts and feelings of one who stands upon the confines of that world through whose open portals he looks with an eye still dimmed by its contact with the flesh? The strange

mingling, it may be, of scenes that have been, scenes that are, and scenes that are to be. The thrill of chords which are being rent asunder and of those which are about to be reunited; the mysterious exit of the soul from a known and tried state of existence to one which is unknown and untried; the melting away of the last, lingering regrets of earthly affection in the full tide of that Love unutterable. There had been formed in the heart of this man of strong, glowing, and unselfish character, a deep attachment for the little "stranger who had entered within his gates," and even now, in this dying hour, her words of childish faith and hope were vaguely floating through his confused and fast-benumbing brain.

The little girl was instantly summoned, and with trembling steps made her way to the bedside of her true-hearted friend. As she entered the room he lay with closed eyes, but his lips were moving, and the words, "Come, O come," were distinctly recognizable. Hearing the sound of her light footfall, he again opened his eyes, and feebly extending his hand as she laid her own in his broad palm, now cold and clammy, he said, with much effort, "Sing—that—"

Alice hesitated a moment, and then, in a voice choked with tears, commenced that hymn which is so familiar to almost every Sunday-school child:

" My latest sun is sinking fast,
My race is almost run;
My strongest trials now are past,
My triumph is begun.

O come, angel band,
Come, and around me stand;
O bear me away on your snowy wings,
To my immortal home."

She gained composure as she proceeded, and sang in a steady voice through the last stanza, when the cold hand clasped her own, and the feeble voice faintly murmured,

"Thank you. They are very near. O! don't you see the shinning ones?"

Then turning to his weeping mother with a look of melting tenderness, he motioned her to put her lips to his own, and with a vain effort to clasp his arms around her neck, the brave, noble heart ceased to beat. Alice thought of her father's words, "There is light ahead," and felt assured that dear Uncle Ben had preceded him into its undimmed radiance.

His aged mother bent over the motionless form, and in a calm voice, with a sublime and unquestioning faith, exclaimed, in the words of His afflicted servant of old:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The funeral was fixed for the third day, and on the preceding afternoon Nellie and Alice, with a mutual feeling of mingled awe and affection, visited the room where reposed all that remained of their much-loved, merry-hearted companion and friend—for such he had been to both old and young. As they softly opened the door, through the glimmering light which

came from a nearly closed blind, they discerned a prostrate figure leaning motionless upon the casket. As their eyes became accustomed to the dusky light, they recognized the stricken mother, hovering in speechless agony over the cold clay.

With instinctive delicacy they drew back, thinking to leave the mourner with her dead, but slight as were the sounds they made, grandma's quick ear detected them, and beckoning them toward her, and encircling them in a close embrace, she stood silently wrestling with the tide of agony which required all the powers of her soul, in conjunction with her true and living faith, to combat. Then gently disengaging herself with loving touches, she smoothed the pure white brow, already smoothed by a colder hand than hers, and pressed a silent kiss upon the for once unresponsive lips.

Alice caught the words, "My bright, brave Ben," and then, with a burst of anguish, the wail of which broke from the mourning king of Israel, as from myriads of bereaved hearts since, "O, my son, my son; would God I had died for thee."

They felt the aged form tremble with the intensity of a grief which the brave Christian was trying to suppress. Darkness was fast enveloping the room in its shadowy folds, and with gentle persuasion the two girls led the unresisting figure to her own apartment. No word of vain, unavailing regret passed the uncomplaining lips, only a gentle submission to her Father's

will, an apparently unreserved resignation of her heart's treasure ; a peaceful, nay, an almost joyful, realization that he had entered upon his inheritance, where her advanced years assured her that there would ere long be a glorious and triumphant reunion.

The next day the remains were removed to the village church, whose limited capacity was utterly insufficient to accommodate the crowd of sincere mourners who thronged its gates, for Uncle Ben had been widely known and loved. After the services the body was conveyed to the neat little cemetery and deposited by the side of his father and a sister who had died many years before.

As the clergyman pronounced the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection," the setting sun poured a flood of golden radiance full into the open grave, as though affording, in addition to the words whose cadences were still thrilling on the ear, a bright and cheering assurance of the glory which was already being revealed.

After the funeral Mr. and Mrs. Morrison made immediate preparations for a return to the city, for the purpose of closing up all business and social relations in view of a speedy removal to Rodman Farm. Grandma could not remain alone, and it would have been like uprooting an ancient oak from its mother earth to remove her from the home of so many years.

Here she had come in early life, a happy bride, with her heart's choice. Here her children had all been born; from this home two had gone forth to take their places as wives and mothers. Here she had followed the husband of her youth and a loved daughter to their last resting-place, and now another tie was added to those which previously bound her to the spot.

No. It was plain that grandma must end her days at the old homestead, the scene around which clustered so many precious, fragrant memories. It was decided that Maud should remain with Harry at the farm for a few weeks, when she would return with her aunt to Boston, and continue her education in that city. Alice, of course, would accompany Mr. and Mrs. Morrison to New York; and Maud shed many tears at the thought of parting with her little play-mate and friend.

Alice had been deeply attached to him who was gone. His gentle kindness, his unvarying good humor, and his thoughtfulness for others, had overcome her timidity and won her shy little heart at the beginning, and now she missed, O so much, the sunny smile, the merry twinkle of the blue eyes, and, more than all, the affectionate sympathy, which seemed to read and understand her unspoken thoughts.

O grave! how often dost thou shut from our sight an eye, whose kindling glances are still quick-

ening our souls! How implacable thou art! How frequently dost thou inclose within thy narrow portal the hand whose touch upon our brow was like the cooling dew of the blushing morn, or like a soft, fragrant June zephyr! How many times hast thou hushed a loved voice, whose tones are still echoing in our ears and thrilling our heart-strings!

How often, too, does the memory of Him whom thou wert powerless to hold turn our wailing dirge into peans of victory as, with exultant joy, we remember that he has triumphed, even over thee!

On the day before her departure Alice asked Nellie to walk with her to the spot now made sacred to them all, as she wished to make an offering of some of the flowers which she had cultivated with such tender care under his direction and assistance.

Her tears flowed fast as she gathered this tribute of affection, and proceeded in silence toward the inclosure where slumbered the sacred dust. The gate stood open, and, drawing near to the grave, they saw Zeke sitting by its side, in a dejected attitude, with his head resting upon the sods which covered the sleeper. Hearing approaching footsteps, he aroused from his crouching posture, and revealed the big tears running down his cheeks.

"Ah, Miss Alice," he said, mournfully, "be yer come ter say good-bye ter this here?"

"Yes, Zeke," she replied. "I am going home to-morrow."

“O,” he said, rocking himself backward and forward, “who’d a thought Mr. Ben ’ud a bin taken afore me? Why, he was well an’ strong, jist in his prime, Mr. Ben was, an’ I’m an ol’ hulk, what aint good fer nothin’.”

Although his listeners knew that Zeke by no means placed so low an estimate upon his importance, they also knew that his grief was sincere, for he had always manifested the utmost respect for his master’s wishes and opinions, together with the highest meed of affection of which so selfish a nature was capable.

“Bless yer hearts!” he continued, as memories of Uncle Ben’s kindness and sympathy thronged upon him, “I dunno whatever I’d a done ef it hadn’t a bin fer Mister Ben, an’ I aint the only one nuther what misses him a’ready. Why, la sakes, deown ter the village they’re all away deown in the mouth, every mother’s son on ’em. He hed lots o’ friends, Mr. Ben hed, an he was a friend ter every body.”

Zeke had struck the key-note of the Christian’s life; that note which rolls its harmonious numbers through every pulsation of his heart, whose sweet refrain swells out from every act of his daily life, that charity which “suffereth long, and is kind.”

This is the note which, if better learned and used, would ring its vibrations through many a soul, lending a charm to lives now desolate, friendless, and well-nigh hopeless; for an unselfish heart, producing a life of unselfish acts, brings its own rich reward.

A life which is spent in considering the interest of others—their hopes, their designs, their aspirations, and, so far as these are worthy, in assisting their development and execution—has not been spent in vain.

Zeke had relapsed into silence, which remained unbroken for some time, a mournful hush resting upon each heart, until, with a sob, he exclaimed,

“An’ ter think that he should a’ lost his life a tryin’ ter save that ere proud woman an’ her darter. They wasn’t wuth it, Miss Nellie,” he continued, the tears coursing each other down his sun-burned and furrowed cheeks; “their lives, both on ’em, wasn’t wuth his’n, but he wouldn’t listen ter nobody. He jist seemed bent on savin’ them two wuthless critters.”

“He died a noble death,” said Alice. “In imitation of the Saviour, he gave his life for others.”

“Noble! ’Course he did; but I don’t b’lieve a man like him whát does good ter every body’s called upon ter kill hisself ter save somebody what aint no good ter nobody.”

“Suppose that had been the principle upon which the Redeemer had provided salvation—only for those whom we call brave and true—where would we stand?” asked Nellie, solemnly.

“Dunno, haint never thought about it that way.”

“Come, Allie,” said Nellie, pointing to the declining sun, “we must go now; it is getting late, and they will be wondering where we are.”

Alice had rifled her garden of all its fragrant

treasures and strewed them with lavish hand upon the grassy bed; now she arose and silently obeyed her gentle monitor.

Zeke also arose, and, shambling after them, closed the gate with noiseless hand, and then slowly and thoughtfully pursued his homeward way.

The last hours of day were resting upon the lonely spot, and silently the shades of twilight were gathering around. Slowly and with majestic march the moon rose and gilded the couch of the dreamless sleeper, while the twinkling stars came out, one by one, and watched, with loving eyes, over the same lonely bed.

There we leave him. Brave, noble Ben! who counted not thy life dear unto thyself; there we leave thee to thy quiet, undisturbed repose. There may thy slumber be sweet until Gabriel, with his trumpet, appears to hail the resurrection morning. We leave thee with flowing tears, but with a glowing assurance for thee in the coming day. Brave, noble heart, farewell.



CHAPTER XIV.

FREQUENT letters from home had assured Alice that her father was, at least, no worse, and, with the quick recuperative power of childhood, she had entirely rallied from the nervous dread with which each succeeding epistle had, for some weeks, been received. No mention had been made of a change of residence, as it was thought that the pleasure of her return would be enhanced by a reception so totally unexpected. When the carriage drew up before the elegant mansion which was henceforth to be her home, she manifested not the slightest token of surprise, supposing that Mrs. Morrison had an errand which would detain her but a few moments.

The awnings, which protected the windows from the glare of the sun during the heat of the day, were now raised to admit the cool morning breeze, which was floating through the rooms. The steps and lintels were dripping with the refreshing shower which had just ceased issuing from the hose now lying coiled upon the sidewalk.

No person was visible, although the last revolution of the wheels had scarcely ceased when Mabel's radiant face appeared at the hall-door, arrayed in smiles as joyous as the radiant morn itself.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Mr. Morrison, as he handed his wife and Alice from the carriage. "There's a rousing welcome waiting for you, Allie, if I am not much mistaken. I know, by the look of Mabel's face, though, that she isn't glad to see you. Not she."

"O, Allie, darling little sister!" was the delighted exclamation of the former, as she hastily snatched Alice, and nearly smothered her with kisses. "I think I never was so glad in my life."

"Hold on, Mabel!" was Mrs. Morrison's laughing rejoinder. "Make an exception in favor of—"

"No," she interrupted, laughing, while a rosy glow spread over her face; "I make no exceptions in favor of any one. Pardon me, dear Mrs. Morrison," she added, in an apologetic tone, "for my rudeness; but, indeed, I am nearly wild with joy."

Allie was so dazed that, when her mother appeared almost immediately, looking so much better and happier than when she last saw her, she was utterly speechless, having no power to ask the why or wherefore of aught she saw or heard.

When her two sturdy brothers came rushing down stairs, Charlie, the elder, exclaiming,

"Hallo, Al! Welcome home! Aint this a bully place to live in?" she was somewhat aroused from the dreamland in which she had been wandering.

"What does it all mean, mamma?" she asked.

"What are you all doing here, and where is papa? I want to see him this very minute."

"So you shall, darling. He is much more comfortable, and waiting with as much impatience as he ever manifests to see his little White Rose."

"Heigho, Allie!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar, now for the first time appearing. "Have you no greeting for auntie?"

"Yes, indeed," she replied, returning the hearty kiss, which the lady had imprinted upon both soft cheeks, now more rounded and not so colorless as when she last bestowed a similar token of affection upon them.

"Now, please, let me see papa," she said, in a pleading tone, turning toward her mother, with a world of tender longing lurking in the deep wells of her dark eyes.

"O, mamma," she said, as she followed her mother up stairs. "I had a lovely time! But, O! it was so sad at the last. Poor Uncle Ben! he was so kind and good."

After the first greeting between Alice and her father had passed, the wonder which had seized her upon her first return again found vent.

"I can't understand it at all," she said, in a perplexed tone. "Why are you all here? Whose house is this? Has papa grown rich again?"

In a few words the mystery was explained, and with quick versatility of thought, she turned to the

subject now uppermost in her mind, which Mrs. Morrison had left her to divulge, considering her the best advocate of her own cause.

After revolving the matter in her mind a few moments, she commenced by saying,

"Mrs. Morrison is coming here this evening, mamma, to see you. She has something to say to you about me. Can you guess what it is?"

"She is going to say that you have driven them all frantic with your mad-cap pranks, and that your presence will never be tolerated there again," answered Mabel, who had entered the room just in time to hear Alice's last remark and the question which she had appended to it.

"No, not that," was Alice's laughing rejoinder. "You are mistaken there, Mabel. O, I may as well tell you. You will never guess. Well, mamma, they want me to go to Boston to school, and stay with the Ormsbees. What do you think of that?"

"Go to Boston to school!" echoed Mrs. Hamilton. "Why, Alice, child, you must be dreaming."

"No, not dreaming, mamma, but wide awake, and in my right mind, too," she added, laughing.

"But, my dear child, I do not see how so much could be accomplished. Education costs something, you know, Allie, at least that style of education does, and there would be your board and other contingent expenses. Indeed, my daughter, I do not think it at all practicable."

"Now, Isabel," exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar, who had been a silent listener, "you are the first person I ever knew who refused to allow the purse of Fortunatus to be dropped into her lap. Accept all the gods offer you. Depend upon it there will not be more than you deserve."

"Heresy! Mabel dear, rank heresy! Bid me rather, with a grateful heart, receive the favors which my covenant-keeping God so constantly sends me in fulfillment of his promises."

Mrs. Dunbar rose and left the room, stopping a moment to whisper in her friend's ear,

"I envy you your trusting faith, Isabel. It is worth a mine of wealth."

Mrs. Hamilton's voice slightly faltered, and her eyes glistened as watching the retreating figure, she drew Alice toward her, saying,

"But how shall we spare our little Allie so long again, so many months?"

"She will soon be *little* Allie no longer, mamma," interrupted her father, desiring to change the current of her thoughts; "she is fast leaving babyhood in the distance; eh, Allie?"

"Yes, papa," she answered; "in a week, I shall be eleven years old."

"Alice," asked her mother, "do you know any thing about the plans proposed? I understand from Mrs. Dunbar's hints that she is to have a hand in the matter, and while I would not be ungrateful, and

wish my little girl to have all the advantages which her heavenly Father sees fit to bestow upon her, yet I must plead guilty to a feeling of delicacy in adding to our already weighty obligations to her. She has the kindest heart in the world, but I cannot consent to burden her to an unlimited extent."

"No, mamma," was Alice's reply, "I do not know; but Mrs. Morrison will tell you all about it."

"I think, my dear," said Mr. Hamilton, addressing his wife, "that the most important point to be decided is, whether Alice would be willing to go so far from home, and for a lengthened period. How is it, Allie?"

Alice hesitated a moment, and the quick tears rushed to her eyes as she answered,

"O, papa, if—I mean, if you were well—and—" then becoming embarrassed, she stopped abruptly.

"I understand what my little daughter would say. She means that if she could be sure that her father would be here on her return, she would be willing to go. Isn't that it, darling?"

She gave an assenting gesture, and he continued,

"Your sensitive little heart shrank from saying that which you feared might wound me. Have no fears of that kind, Allie. I am so much more comfortable, that, while I can never recover, I believe the doctor thinks that I may live many years. Our lives are all in God's hands, you know, darling. 'He can smite and he can heal.' It would not be worth while for you to forego the opportunity of securing

a good education for my sake. It is an inheritance I would like to have left my little daughter, but God has placed it beyond my power, and if in his infinite kindness he bestows it upon her through another hand, she need not hesitate to accept it. There can be no doubt that this is the ordering of his providence, and he will take care of the result. So put your father out of your thoughts, Allie dear, and all will be well."

"Are you and mamma quite willing I should go?" she asked, glancing quickly from one to the other, with a half-tearful and half-smiling countenance.

"Allie, did you ever think that when a sweet young rose-bud is severed from the parent stem, even though it go to grace the form of some beautiful lady, or to embellish the christening of some lovely babe, that even then the bereaved stem of the bush weeps tears? And do you imagine that we could allow our little pale blossom to leave without many tears, even though, unlike the rose-bush, we have the hope that our bud will return to us, fairer, sweeter, and diffusing a richer fragrance?"

He paused a moment, during which Alice's tears flowed fast, and then resumed:

"Tell us all that is in your heart, as that will assist in a decision so important to you. You know, Allie dear, that it is your interest that we seek."

Alice choked back her tears, and answered, stoutly,

"Well, papa, I will tell you the truth. I am a big

girl, and know almost nothing. I do want to be—what is a strong-minded woman, mamma?”

“A strong-minded woman, in the popular sense, is one whom I hope my Alice will never become. One who is dissatisfied with the sphere of life in which it has pleased God to give her existence, and tries to unsex herself by assuming those pursuits which are usually accorded to the sex whom the Creator has endowed with those faculties which render them abler and fitter to cope with the Babel of the outside world. She is unwilling, faithfully and intelligently, to fulfill her legitimate duties—the care of her household, the use of her needle, and the thousand-and-one acts of Christian kindness which a true woman knows so well how to perform, but must step out into public life, mount the rostrum, deliver lectures on Woman’s Rights and other kindred topics, go to the ballot-box, and, in short, do any thing and every thing that no modest, refined woman ever ought to dream of doing.”

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Hamilton, clapping his hands. “Why, my dear, you are waxing eloquent. Don’t let us have you doing the very thing you reprobate.”

“I always grow eloquent on this theme,” she replied, “but only in the retirement of home; my voice will never penetrate the ears of the vulgar crowd. When I think,” she added, the color rising to her cheeks, “of my own sex so misapplying the high talents with which Heaven has endowed very many,

it makes my cheeks tingle with shame for those who are themselves shameless."

"Mamma is right," rejoined Mr. Hamilton, seriously; "and I thank God for the assurance I feel in my inmost heart that my little White Rose and my sweet, noble Mabel have no such proclivities; but, my dear, have you forgotten to paint the other side of the picture?"

"No, I have not forgotten it," was the laughing rejoinder. "Shall I present my views still further in my own peculiarly eloquent style? That is what the reporters say, is it not?"

"By all means. I know of no one who is better qualified, by actual experience, in possession of those qualities you will attempt to describe."

"Well, then, Alice, a strong-minded woman, in the true sense, is one who takes up the burdens of her life, if burdens there be in her lot—and who is utterly exempt?—bearing them in a spirit of cheerful self-sacrifice, for the sake of Christ and those whom she loves; who shrinks from no duties, however distasteful; who, as Solomon expressed it, 'looks well to the ways of her household;' who, instead of delegating the holy office of motherhood to hirelings, cares for the welfare of the children whom God has given her, ministering to them in illness, superintending their education, and bringing them up as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. She will not blush nor faint, if it so chance that she be found, by a

fashionable acquaintance, with sleeves rolled up, and arms whitened with the flour of which she is preparing the bread which is to become the muscle and fiber of husband and children. She is one who will adapt herself to any position which her heavenly Father designs for her; working, if need be, with hand and brain, with cheerful alacrity, or presiding with ease and dignity over a home whose synonym is—*almost heaven*. Have I made my subject sufficiently lucid?" she asked, turning to her husband, with a smile.

As she glanced at him she detected the humidity in his eyes, but he quickly rallied, and, looking fondly toward Alice, replied,

"I should say so, without doubt; but as Alice is auditor on this occasion, to her the appeal must be made."

"I think I know what mamma means," said Alice, looking up quickly with her own peculiarly bright, intelligent expression. "I think Mrs. Ormsbee and Mrs. Morrison—yes, and Grandma Rodman, too—are such women, because they behaved so beautifully when Uncle Ben died. They loved him dearly, mamma, but they never made the least fuss about it—they were so quiet—because they said it was God's will, and dear Ben had gone to a better world. Isn't that a beautiful faith, mamma?"

"Yes, darling," was the low, soft answer; "God grant it may be yours, also."

"Forgive me, please, mamma, for putting you last; but I have often wondered if those women I have heard talked so much about, were like my dear, beautiful mamma, so good, so gentle, so lovely!"

"Flatterer!" replied her mother, putting her hand over the sweet lips, and gently patting the soft arms that so lovingly encircled her neck.

"No, not flattery. Truly, I would like to be like my own dear mamma, and I would like to be like those women who write beautiful poetry and books. Do you think I could?" she asked, while the rich color rose to the fair cheeks.

"I don't know, darling. That is a gift from God, which my little Alice may or may not possess; but in either case she can work for him, if not with her pen, at least in some other way."

"Well, the reason," she replied, thoughtfully, "that I want to go to Boston is, that I may have a chance to learn all that is necessary; and if there is any thing of that kind in me, I shall know it after I have studied and learned a great deal; sha'n't I, mamma? I have beautiful thoughts now, sometimes; and, may be, if I study hard, when I get older, I may be able to write them."

"You are right, Allie," answered her father. "There is no doubt that education will develop whatever latent talent you may possess; and I am glad that my little girl manifests sufficient strength of character to be willing to make so great a sacrifice for

the sake of a benefit which lies wholly in the future. But, my child, consider the matter well. Take into your calculation a prolonged absence from home and friends, and possible, nay, Allie, probable, hours of weariness and home-sickness, during which you would give all the world contains, were it at your disposal, for an hour's petting from mamma and papa, or a pleasant chat with Mabel. I do not wish to discourage you, darling, but I would have you carefully count the cost, lest, having put your hand to the plow, you look back."

"No, papa," was the decided reply, "I will not look back after I have once started. I shall think what I am there for; and if I get homesick I will try to overcome it by studying all the harder, and I think that will help me bear the pain. Then, you know, I shall be with Maud and the Ormsbee girls, and I know Mrs. Ormsbee will take good care of me. I think God will help me," she added, reverently, "because I want to learn, so that when I grow up I can take care of you and mamma. Mabel gives music lessons; why should not I do something useful, too? I am determined to try, at least."

"So you shall, darling," replied Mr. Hamilton, with glistening eye; and perhaps I shall live to see a second Mrs. Browning, or Gail Hamilton—our namesake, by the way, Allie. Strange things happen, and I do not think it would be so very strange a thing if my thoughtful little daughter should prove herself

capable of accomplishing something creditable one of these days."

"Thank you, papa, for your encouragement. If you and mamma consent to let me go, I will do my very best, I promise you."

Nothing further was said upon the subject that morning; but Alice amused her father by giving a graphic description of Zeke's peculiarities, recounting, with infinite zest, the fond father's hopes in regard to his son's undeveloped poetical talent. Tony also came in for his share of notice, Alice thus bringing to light a faculty of imitation which had hitherto lain dormant.

Mr. Hamilton laughed heartily, and seemed in such good spirits, that Alice felt repaid for the effort she had made to entertain him. She continued her narrative until nearly luncheon-time, giving pleasant and truthful descriptions of places and things she had seen. Uncle Ben's heroism and consequent death were pathetically and touchingly detailed.

"*Tres bien!*" exclaimed her father, as she finished her recital. "I believe my little White Rose may whisper some pleasant thoughts to listening ears some of these days."

"Perhaps," she answered, as the sound of the luncheon-bell summoned them to the dining-room.

The next morning Dr. Monroe presented himself, when, catching a sight of Alice, he exclaimed,

"Hallo! had an arrival, eh?" then, taking her

by the shoulder, he continued: "She's got some color in her cheeks, too. Why this isn't a shadow, Hamilton—veritable substance! More muscle, too, as well as flesh. How many hundred pounds can you lift? They must have given you something mighty nice to eat, to make you look so much more like a human being than you did two months ago."

"Every thing that was nice," she answered, laughing.

"Must be a good place to go. Do you think they would feed me as well as they did you?"

Alice gave him a comical look, which he immediately interpreted correctly.

"Aha! I see how it is, Miss Alice; you think I am not sufficiently attenuated to require such food as agreed so well with you."

"Why, I lived mostly on milk," she replied.

"Yes, and I see you are thinking of the words of Holy Writ, 'Milk for babes, and meat for strong men,'" responded the good-natured doctor.

"Doctor," asked Alice, in a confidential tone, as she drew closer to his side, "Isn't papa better?"

"Better! Yes, ever so much; and so are you."

"Doctor, do you know they want to take my little girl away from me again?" asked Mr. Hamilton, drawing Alice toward him, and holding her in a closer embrace.

"Take her away! Well, she don't amount to much. Let her go. What benighted intellect can possibly

induce them to want such a worthless little chit as she is?"

Mrs. Hamilton briefly repeated the proposition which Mrs. Morrison had made to her the previous evening, namely, that Alice should go to Brookline, one of the beautiful suburban towns which environ Boston, to live in the family of Mrs. Ormsbee, and attend a school which enjoyed a high reputation, in company with her daughters and Maud.

After listening patiently to the matter, as also to Alice's reasons for wishing to go, as given by her mother, Dr. Monroe turned his laughing eyes full upon the little girl, with a comical look, which melted her thoughtful expression into a bright smile.

"Whew! A strong-minded woman! Heaven forefend! Fancy Alice, a lank woman, with blue spectacles, always *en déshabillé*, hair cropped in her neck, inky fingers, slip-shod shoes, and all the et-ceteras of a literary woman. Bah! Fancy the old doctor going to see *bas-bleu*—afraid of his life, lest every word will be weighed in the balance, and found wanting, saying inwardly, 'From all literary women, good Lord, deliver us!'"

Alice laughed immoderately at this uninviting picture, and then exclaimed,

"O, doctor, I never could be like that! Are all the women who write such nice books, and think so much about angels and flowers, and every thing beautiful, so disgusting? They can't be! O, I know, you

are laughing at me," she cried, as she caught the amused look in his twinkling eye.

"Laughing at you! of course I am. We shall see you some of these days with ink spots on your gown as big as a silver dollar. But come, you haven't told me yet how you managed to spend nine weeks in the wilderness."

"Wilderness!" she echoed. "No wilderness, I assure you, doctor. Why, it is a lovely place. And I had such a good time. But do you know what I liked better than any thing else?"

"No," he answered; "what could that possibly have been?"

"My garden!" she replied, triumphantly. "O, Dr. Monroe, I had such lovely flowers there, and I named them, and then I used to hold conversations with them; and I used to fancy that they whispered such beautiful things to me, and when their fragrance came to me on the air, I imagined it was a sweet voice talking to me. There was a tall, stately lily, that always looked so pure and lovely. I called it '*mamma*;' and then, right next, was a tall white carnation tied up on sticks, and it was so pale and delicate—that was '*papa*,' because it always made me think of him as he looked when I went away, propped up by pillows, and so pale. Then I had a forget-me-not; that was Mabel."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the doctor, "your forget-me-not was of but little use if it did not induce you

to remember me. I should think I might have had a place in your thoughts."

"O, you did! You did! I did remember you," she replied, laughing. "There was a big pink peony, that always looked up at me with such a good-natured face, that I called it Dr. Monroe."

A burst of laughter followed this confession, recovering from which the good doctor exclaimed,

"Well, well! Then I am a big blushing peony, am I? Complimentary, Miss Alice. Perhaps you also meant to suggest that the *language* is applicable to me. Not so far out of the way, either. I always was considered an exceedingly bashful young man."

"Come, Al!" exclaimed Charlie, "I want you to come and see Frisky eat his luncheon."

"Who is Frisky?" asked the doctor, catching the boy, and intercepting his rapid progress toward Alice. "I think that would be a good name for you, my young fellow!"

"O, Frisky is my rabbit," answered the boy, good naturedly. "Come on, Al."

"Now, doctor," said Mrs. Hamilton, as the two children vanished, "I want your opinion about this matter; would it be wise for us to make the arrangement of which I spoke?"

"Wise! Of course it would be wise. Why, my dear lady, it is just the very thing. Couldn't be better if I had planned it out of my own astute brain. Don't you see all the advantages of the plan? Let

us enumerate them. In the first place, considering the question from a physical stand-point—that, you know, is a doctor's natural outlook. Well, then, the benefit of living, for the greater part of the year, where she could inhale pure, fresh air, would be incalculable. That is precisely what she needs. Her blood lacks oxygen, which will, of course, be more liberally supplied in a suburban town, than in the midst of a crowded city. Then the contact with strangers, especially those of her own age, will do much toward toning down the fine edges of that super-sensitiveness, which forms so large a component part of her organization. Pardon me, but if she were to remain at home, her intercourse would be, almost exclusively, with those who are so much of her own stamp, that the tendency would rather be deepened and intensified, if that were possible."

"But, doctor, one great feature of the case to me is, that she would be with cultivated Christian people. I could not bear the idea of her living with a coarse, vulgar family. It would be positive suffering to her."

"Nor I, my dear madam, not at all—not at all; but, believe me, Alice has too much of that element for her happiness. Much as we, from our superior heights of education and refinement, look down, mayhap with pity, more often, I fear, with contempt, upon the coarse, uncultured masses, I believe they are by far happier than those whose refined hypersensitiveness renders them keenly alive to every

grammatical error, or coarse word, to say nothing of the constant attrition of daily life."

"You are undoubtedly right," replied Mrs. Hamilton. "There can be no question that those persons who are not shocked by expressions that would be positive torture to many ears; who can enjoy, or at least gloss over, an unseemly jest; in whose hearts an unkind word, or a cutting sarcasm finds but slight lodgment, are the happier portion of the community. But you will allow, doctor, that while the keen edge of unkindness wounds them less deeply, they also lose the exquisite delight which those of higher tone and culture realize in the gratification of their tastes. Then, too, take into consideration its effect upon conscience. The possessor of a highly sensitive conscience is more pure and lovely than one in whom it lies smoldering, and upon which no breath of enlightenment has blown to kindle it into a living flame. Because your theory is correct, in the main, you certainly would not have poor human nature remain in the depths of ignorance, lest an element of unhappiness be developed in them. You surely would not prohibit the education of the masses as a means of reforming and elevating the race?"

"By no means. Do not misunderstand me, or for one moment imagine that I depreciate education, or that refinement which is its outgrowth; I admire it in Alice exceedingly; but I confess to you that I have often trembled for her happiness in future

years, for unavoidable contact with the world, which is not always careful of the feelings of others, may sometimes bring her pain. You will grant, I think, Mrs. Hamilton, that the exquisite delights of which you speak are but the occasional flashes which scintillate upon us at intervals—sometimes long intervals, too—while we are daily, nay, hourly, beset by annoyances, petty, it may be, but all the more exasperating for that very reason. Why, a man can tolerate a lion, because he is a respectable quadruped; but these insinuating small fry that infest the air, inserting their pestiferous little bills into one's flesh, and filling the ear with their discordant sounds, are beyond endurance."

"I don't know about the validity of that statement," laughed Mrs. Hamilton; "I am somewhat of the opinion that his leonine majesty might assert his supremacy in a somewhat summary manner."

"I think it quite possible," responded the doctor, "that I might not care to grapple with the king of beasts; but we can fight a respectable foe, even though he be a formidable one. But, seriously, my dear lady, you will acknowledge that to the highly-wrought, nervous temperament—for excessively sensitive people are usually of a nervous organism—the little annoyances of life, with their corrosive power, the hasty word, caustic, perhaps, but regretted as soon as spoken, ruffles the calmness and serenity of the wounded heart; and as these things are constantly

occurring, and we have no shield with which we can cover ourselves, we must suffer, more or less, according to the delicacy or toughness of our mental and moral fiber."

"There is much truth and justice in your remarks, doctor; but do you forget the fact that there is a neutralizing—nay, better than that, a sanctifying—power, which transmutes these things into an elixir of spiritual life, and fixes the heart with firm reliance on that Friend who remembers our infirmities and deals so gently with us?"

"No, I neither forget nor repudiate that fact. Indeed, it would be impossible for me to do so, as its manifestation has been too frequently brought before me to allow it ever to slip from my mind."

"Speaking of happiness," said Mr. Hamilton, who had hitherto been a silent listener, "you have had a wide field of observation, doctor, what does your experience prove? What is or would be the result if a comparison were instituted between Christians and those who serve, not Christ, but the world? Or, in other words, what estimate do you place upon their happiness whose 'house is built upon the sand?'"

"It is not worth that, sir," he replied, emphatically snapping his fingers. "A bubble, a mere bubble, a puff of wind, a breath of air, and it is gone—vanished in utter nothingness."

"Do you think," returned Mr. Hamilton, "that the devotees of this world are really happy while the

sources of enjoyment remain, or is it merely superficial ? ”

“ Effervescent, sir, the froth on the surface, but less below—excitement, day-dreams, a restless, factitious gayety, which they try to pass off for the true coin ; but it is spurious ; there is no doubt of it. It has not the ring of the genuine metal.”

“ I often think,” said Mrs. Hamilton, “ of Sir Guy Morville’s definition of happiness : ‘ Gleams from a brighter world, too soon eclipsed or forfeited.’ ”

“ Yes,” rejoined the doctor, “ that has been in my mind a great many times, and I have often thought that, if I might be allowed to do so, I would like to offer an amendment on that sentiment, rendering it, ‘ Gleams from a brighter world, soon to be merged in its more full-orbed glory.’ But ! ” he exclaimed, rising, and looking at his watch, “ I must go ! Some of my patients have been looking for me for the last hour, while I have been enjoying myself talking to two sensible persons who know what they are talking about, which is not true of every body. When does Alice go ? Not just yet, I suppose.”

“ No. Mrs. Morrison received a letter from her sister yesterday, in which she learned that Mr. Ormsbee expects to be in New York the first week in October, and Alice will accompany him when he returns home.”



CHAPTER XV.

“L’HOMME propose, et Dieu dispose.” Mr. Ormsbee, being seriously indisposed for several days, was unable to visit the city, according to agreement; but Dr. Parker, who had engaged to occupy one of the Boston pulpits about the time proposed for Alice’s departure, offered himself as her escort. Mrs. Ormsbee was anxious that she should be punctual, and feeling that too much time had already been lost, having only returned home the previous week, she desired to place her daughters in school at once, so Dr. Parker’s offer was gratefully accepted.

The sultry dog-days had passed, and September, with its mellow beauty, was on the wane, and with its decline came also the close of Alice’s stay at home. Mrs. Dunbar, who had entered heartily into the plan, had generously supplied her wardrobe with every article which could possibly be needed.

“For you know, Isabel,” she said, earnestly, “the child is going among strangers, and we want our Allie to make as good an appearance as the best of them. There will be no sweeter face, I promise you, and I intend that she shall be dressed in such a manner as to adorn her beauty.”

"Ah, Mabel, dear," was the smiling reply, "if she only possesses the adornment of that 'meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price,' I think I can be content."

"Meek and quiet!" repeated Mrs. Dunbar. "She has those qualities in abundance, I should say."

"Nay, Mabel," was the rejoinder of her friend, "she seems to us very gentle and amiable, I grant you, but there is something more than these natural characteristics required, dear, to render us acceptable to Him, in whose sight 'the heavens are not clean.' Our own merit, however great, can never purchase our salvation. That must be the free gift of God, through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour."

Mrs. Hamilton had often observed in this hitherto worldly woman a tenderness on this subject, and an evident desire for information, which, with the natural perversity or diffidence of the human heart, she as evidently tried to veil under an assumed indifference or gayety of manner. This morning, however, her desire for a conversation was quite manifest, and she herself continued it by saying, thoughtfully, and with some embarrassment of manner,

"There is one thing, Isabel, which I do not understand."

"Are you alone there, think you, Mabel? Do any of us understand the mystery of God manifest in the flesh? But, if you will explain your difficulty, per-

haps I may be able to assist you in some way to solve the problem ; or, if it be one which is insoluble, even to the keenest intellect, we must take it upon trust ; or, more properly, must accept it, because it is indorsed by the best and truest of all indorsers."

"Isabel," was the subdued reply, "it may appear strange to you, but I have never been able to understand how the death of Christ could save you and me, for instance, from the penalty of our sins. Do not think I doubt it. I do not. I believe it with all my heart, and I do not mind acknowledging to you that this subject is in my mind almost constantly."

"If, as you say, you believe it with all your heart, why do you hesitate to avail yourself of it? It must be a personal matter between your God and your own heart. Make it so, dearest, and end this miserable warfare. Your better feelings, animated by the Holy Spirit, are struggling with the sinful tendencies of your nature. Let them gain the ascendancy, Mabel dear, and respond to that loving invitation, 'My daughter, give me thy heart.'"

"Does not the Bible say something about being willing, but not knowing how? That is just my case."

"Yes. Paul says, 'For to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.'"

"As I told you, I cannot understand the atonement, and then, even if I did understand it, I have no idea

in what the acceptance of it consists. I am all in the dark, like a benighted mariner, with neither compass nor chart to guide me."

"Do not say that, Mabel. You have within reach of your hand the only chart you need. Remember the testimony of the psalmist: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.'"

"Isabel," rejoined Mrs. Dunbar, "see here. If you could die for me, or I for you, the one who made the sacrifice could not purchase salvation for the other. We are each responsible for our own acts; how, then, can the death of one person secure the redemption of a whole world, nay, for aught we know, of myriads of worlds?"

"You forget, dearest, the one fundamental fact, which underlies the whole superstructure. Indeed, Mabel, you are reasoning in a circle; however wide a scope your thoughts take, you invariably return to the point from which you started, and will assuredly continue to do so until you take into consideration the immense, vital difference between your suppositious sacrifice and the genuine one offered on Calvary. Dear Mabel, you have entirely lost sight of the divinity of the Great Sacrifice. You say truly, that the death of either of us could not avail for the other, for the reason that we are both alike sinners."

"Of course, I believe that Christ was the Son of God," interrupted Mrs. Dunbar, quickly.

"Yes, dear, you believe it with your intellect, but

your heart has not as yet taken Him as your own divine, personal Saviour—just as really your Saviour as though you were the only sinner in his vast universe. There are two kinds of faith, you know, Mabel—a mere intellectual belief, according to which we look upon him simply as we do upon any other historical character. We never saw him, neither did we ever see Julius Cæsar, or Alexander the Great, yet we believe in their existence, because history tells us that such individuals once existed, and we accept certain acts of their lives as fixed facts. Just so the great mass of the human family accept the God-man—a mere intellectual acknowledgment that such a person once lived and died, the Great Sufferer in the scene of Calvary. But there is also a precious, saving faith, by which we apprehend and take to our own hearts this blessed surety for our acceptance and justification with the Father.”

Mrs. Dunbar made no reply, and Mrs. Hamilton proceeded:

“Here the glory of the sacrifice is manifested, because Jesus Christ, being God, the Son of the Father, and his equal in power and glory, left his throne and took upon him our flesh, becoming of a dual nature, his human nature rendering him a fit and perfect sympathizer with us, in every thing, sin excepted, and his Godhead made that absolutely sinless character the only acceptable offering. You can very readily see, that no taint of corruption could mingle

with the atonement, or it would have been insufficient to fulfill the Father's requirement of compensation for his broken law. Perhaps, if we look at the etymology of the word, it will assist you. Instead of dividing the syllables, as is usually done, *a-tone-ment*, suppose we make it, according to its true sense, *at-one-ment*, or the act by which we are made *at one*, that is, at peace with God, through the divine propitiatory sacrifice. Does the matter appear any clearer to you now, Mabel?"

"Thank you, dearest Isabel. You have given me much assistance, and thrown some light on a subject which was very dark to me before."

"Pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, dear," said Mrs. Hamilton, as her friend rose and left the room.

The old and trite saying, "Time and tide wait for no man," proved true in Alice's case, as in every other, and the first day of October was as prompt as usual in its recurrence. Faithfully it had kept its record, and faithfully it met its agreement with the world at large. To the young and happy it brought a fresh accession of joyous exhilaration; to those whose years were already in "the sear and yellow leaf," it proved a vivid reminder of the mellow autumn of their own lives. In its fresh, crisp air, the sick and suffering found a relief from the burning heat of the past weeks, a truce in every oxygenated gale, while those who were consciously drawing near

to the gates of the grave realized that no return of its gorgeous beauty would greet their mortal vision.

To Alice it brought a rush of conflicting feelings. With tender thoughts of home and friends were mingled dreams of school life—an intense thirst for the acquisition of knowledge, and aspirations for the future; while, with a sudden pang, the possibility of her father's death during her absence would flash across her mind, almost causing her to regret her decision. Then hope, with its talismanic touch, would change the scene, by presenting before her, in glowing colors, the goal toward which her ambition pointed.

So, with a swelling heart, but a brave and calm exterior, she found herself ready to accompany Dr. Parker to the new scenes to which her vivid imagination had already given form and coloring.

“Well, Miss Alice,” said Dr. Monroe, as he shook hands at parting, “I will try to look less like a great blushing peony when next we meet. I have no doubt a residence in Boston will make you more critical than ever, and I shall have to study to tone down my obesity and high color to suit your fastidious taste.”

“O, Dr. Monroe, don't!” she said, earnestly. “I think you are just right as you are.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the good-natured doctor; “so you admire peonies, do you? Well, a tinge of their rosy hues might do *you* no harm; though, I believe,” he added, as he pinched her cheek, “that literary women are always pale and lank; aint they, Parker?”

"Generally, I believe they are, doctor," he replied. "My acquaintance with the genus has inclined me to be of your opinion."

"Yes," responded the doctor, relapsing into a serious tone; "they study and think too hard and too much, take too little exercise, and, as a natural consequence, use up their brain power too soon. As a rule, their physical structure is out of proportion and sympathy with the seething caldron which we call *brain*, and utterly unable to cope with its furnace-like working. Hence the weak, pale, attenuated body, which is being gradually worn away by the unnatural friction. If these women could go into the field and toss over the fragrant hay, reveling in God's bright, joyous sunshine, and filling their lungs with the pure air of heaven as it comes fresh from the upper realm, nine tenths of them would get some color in their cheeks and some flesh on their bones; but, no, they stay in the house, and think, until they are as nearly transparent as that glass," he added, pointing to a plate of ground glass in the door near him. "So you see, Miss Alice, blooming looks and authorship don't go together," he continued, as he handed her into the carriage.

Alice replied to his raillery only with a quiet smile, and soon found herself within the sound of the shrieking of engines, in the midst of a bustling crowd hurrying hither and thither to all points, and on as many missions.

While Dr. Parker was securing the tickets Alice found occupation in studying the various phases of human nature, usually so conspicuous at such places. Among those who most attracted her attention were a lady and a gentleman, the former of whom, being of odd and somewhat antiquated appearance, formed the nucleus around which her thoughts clustered. Although the lady and her companion were direct antipodes, it was evident, from several little interchanges of graceful courtesy, so beautiful in married life, that they were husband and wife, as also that they had not advanced to the fashionable stage of utter indifference, nay, we had almost said, of bare toleration. Alice's imagination was sorely taxed to discover an alchemy which would fuse such, apparently, incongruous elements into what, to her unfledged ideas of romance, seemed a harmonious whole.

She was so much engaged weaving her tissue of pretty fictions, in which these two persons largely figured, having invested her heroine with a halo of Christian graces in whose reflection her unprepossessing exterior was entirely lost sight of, that she was utterly unconscious of Dr. Parker's approach until the slender threads of her thoughts were snapped asunder by a pleasant voice at her side saying, cheerily,

"I beg your pardon for leaving you so long alone, but it was unavoidable; I had to wait my turn. Ah! did I frighten you, little one?" he asked, observing her sudden start.

"O no, sir," she answered, smiling, as she rose to follow her companion, casting behind her a look expressive of keen regret that her imaginative fabric must remain incomplete.

After she was seated in the cars, however, and the bustle attendant upon departure had ceased, her mind was at liberty to resume its former employment, and, after having disposed of her principal characters to her satisfaction, her thoughts wandered to the scenes whither she was bound. She sat a long time in silence, her heart too full to allow her to be a very voluble companion.

Dr. Parker, while appearing to be wholly engrossed with his newspaper, cast frequent furtive glances at the pale, intellectual face beside him.

"What subject can possibly be so absorbing that you cannot vouchsafe a word of conversation to your forlorn traveling companion?" he asked, smiling.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she replied, with an effort to recover herself. "I didn't think you were very forlorn. I supposed your newspaper was company enough."

"Judging me out of your own wise little head," he responded, playfully, "you imagined, because your thoughts furnished you sufficient company, that my paper was performing the same friendly service for me, did you? Bad logic—ground untenable. Besides, that is a violation of Scripture, which says, expressly, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

"Excuse me, Dr. Parker," she rejoined, with a bright smile, "but isn't that just what you are doing? It seems to me if I am guilty, so are you."

"Ah, ha!" he responded, "I find I am dealing with an acute little logician. I shall have to study my points. But you were in very deep thought, just now? Suppose you imagine me your father confessor, and make me the repository of these very sage reflections. That is what all good Catholics do, you know."

"Yes," she answered, decidedly, "but I am not a Catholic, and God is my confessor."

"Do you mean to say?" he asked, "that you would never, under any circumstances, confess to any other than God?"

"O no, sir," she responded, quickly; "if I had disobeyed papa, or mamma, or in any way hurt their feelings, I would acknowledge it, and ask their forgiveness. If I had offended you, sir, I would say, 'Dr. Parker, I have done wrong; I am sorry; will you pardon me?' Indeed, I don't know but I ought to do so now," she added, with a tremulous smile.

"For what, my dear child?" asked he, in a tone of much surprise. "I am quite positive that you have not transgressed any law, known or unknown, since you have been under my charge. Your conduct has been irreproachable."

"I am very glad you think so, sir, but my conscience tells me that I was slightly rude to you a

few moments ago. I am very *sorry*," she added, artlessly. "Will you forgive me?"

"You must possess a very sensitive conscience, indeed, if it accuses you of any misdemeanor. I have not detected the slightest, but be assured that, if any has been committed, my forgiveness is fully and freely accorded. Indeed, little one, you may accept it, as a foregone conclusion, for I can scarcely imagine you to be guilty of any act which would forfeit my warmest approbation."

"Thank you, sir," she replied, with a frank smile; "you see I *have* made you my father confessor, after all, and now I don't mind telling you what I was thinking of, if you are not too tired to listen to—"

"O, no!" he interrupted, laughing; "I suppose they referred to your last new dress; or whether mamma had packed your doll in your trunk."

"No, indeed," she rejoined, quickly, "I have done playing with dolls; I have something else to do. And I wasn't thinking of my dresses at all. Dr. Parker, I was trying to imagine what my school life will be, and wondering what I shall study."

"Well, my dear little girl, allow me to say that your school life, as are all our lives, to a greater or less degree, will be very much what you make it. Does that appear like a startling or a presumptuous statement, Alice? Remember, I am not leaving God out of the question. I believe that he orders and rules all events, but I also believe that, all things being equal,

we are, so to speak, the artificers of our own lives, and for this reason. We may make things pleasant, or the reverse, just according to the spirit which we carry around with us."

"I think I know what you mean," she replied. "You think that if we are gentle and kind, and always thoughtful, we shall find others so to us."

"Exactly," he responded, pleased with her clear and ready appreciation of his words; "that is just as true as is the fact that if we go through life with a grim visage, like an ugly cur, snapping and snarling, we must expect snapping and snarling in return. One of our popular preachers says, 'All men are full of dogs. Temper is a gnarly cur; destructiveness is a bull-dog; combativeness is a hound, that runs, and barks, and bites. We are full of dogs. Thousands of men are set to barking, and thousands of men are set venomously to biting, because that which is bad in them is so treated, that it is roused up.' I believe he is right, and I think experience proves it so."

Alice made no response, and he continued,

"Now, in reference to the other topic—your studies. Of course your teachers will decide that, but you will permit me to make a few suggestions which may possibly be of some assistance to you. To commence, then, you have not a very robust physical organization, my little friend, and as eleven years is not a very advanced stage of existence, I should say that you have abundant time to lay a firm foundation

of physical health and strength before you attempt to tax the brain too severely. Walk and run in the open air, my dear child. Inflate your lungs, inhale all the oxygen you can; you will find that a prime invigorator. Eat well, sleep well, be cheerful and happy, and, I trust, you will grow better and stronger. If you are careful to strengthen this body you will lay a good foundation, on which you can raise an intellectual structure, of fair and beautiful proportions, and you will enjoy your edifice when it is raised; but, depend upon it, a frail body robs life of much of its sweetness. Suppose you give me an outline of what you have studied.

"Well," she answered, thoughtfully, "I have been nearly half through Brown's Grammar, have studied history and geography, commenced Latin, and—"

"Yes," he interrupted, "that will do. You know something of the fundamental rules, I suppose."

"O yes, sir! I have been nearly through 'percentage.' I have done a good many examples in interest, too, finding the interest by aliquot parts."

"Whew!" whistled Dr. Parker. "Well, my little girl, if I were your teacher, I would place a stone—a good heavy one, too—upon your mental stature, so that you should grow no more for the next six months, at least. I would allow you to study nothing new, if study you must, but would see to it that your mental digestive apparatus had fully disposed of all that conglomerate mass."

“But, sir, I understand it all; papa taught me, and he was very thorough. He never allowed me to leave a single example until I could explain every part of it. He said ladies ought to be familiar with all the business rules.”

“And he is quite right. But I would have you rest upon your present acquirements for a time. Take your mental aliment in small quantities, and be careful to masticate it well. You will gain more varied and extensive information by reading instructive books, than you will by too closely adhering to your text-books. One word on that point, my dear child. Read only those books which will elevate and ennoble the whole tone of your mind and heart.”

“Do you think it wrong to read novels?”

“Novels, strictly so-called, I would utterly ignore. Those silly, vapid love stories, which fill the minds and hearts of young girls and boys with a weak, romantic sentimentalism, are pernicious alike to the morals and the happiness. Occasionally, you may have put into your hands, by some judicious friend, a work which is couched in pure and beautiful language, and whose moral is good. Do not hesitate to read it, if you are sure of the wisdom of your adviser; but no pure young girl, of unformed mind, should read all the pernicious mass of trash with which our cities are deluged. Make your selection by the advice and under the direction of some wise, true friend. Be careful not to make too rapid

strides, but take time to think carefully over every page, before you turn the leaf, for in the mental, as in the physical, structure, it is not the quantity of food which is taken, but its quality, and the amount which assimilates with either body or brain and becomes a part of ourselves, which is a benefit to us."

Here Alice's attention was attracted by the appearance of one of the two persons who had so much interested her at the depot, and, gently touching the elbow of her companion, she said,

"I think, sir, that gentleman is wishing to speak to you."

Dr. Parker turned and offered a courteous greeting to the stranger, then, reversing the back of the seat in front, which was unoccupied, he motioned him to be seated.

"Perhaps you do not recognize me, sir?"

"I do, indeed, perfectly," was the unhesitating reply, and to prove it I will recount to you the circumstances under which we first met. I had the honor of performing the marriage service for you a few weeks ago at my house, in Thirty-fifth Street."

"Ha, ha! Your memory is good, sir. Perhaps you also recollect a little circumstance connected with that occasion, which, by the way, made me the happiest of men?"

"There my recollection is at fault," was the somewhat puzzled rejoinder. "I hope, however, Mrs. —"

"Horton," supplied the listener.

"Ah, yes. Thank you. I hope Mrs. Horton is quite well."

"Quite well, thanks, quite well. She is on board the train, and, with your permission, I shall do myself the honor of presenting her before we leave."

"Do so, by all means," returned Dr. Parker, with a slight inclination of his head.

"In the meantime, perhaps, you will do me the favor to examine this document. It may refresh your recollection. I hope," he added, rising and bowing politely, "that you will find it entirely satisfactory."

Without waiting for a reply he was gone. Dr. Parker turned the envelope over in his hands a moment, and then, with a comical expression of mingled curiosity and incredulity, he broke the seal and disclosed to view ten new, crisp ten-dollar bills.

"A hundred dollars!" he exclaimed. "Well, generosity, like repentance, is better late than never."

Our clerical friend possessed descriptive powers of an almost inimitable character, and he now gave Alice an amusing account of the wedding, over which they both enjoyed a hearty laugh.

When the cars stopped to give the passengers an opportunity for refreshments, Alice uncovered her basket and brought to view the tempting luncheon which Mrs. Dunbar had ordered to be prepared for her.

"Well, daughter," asked her companion, "what kind of beverage shall I get for you? I always find solids somewhat difficult to dispose of without the assistance of some fluid. Will you have tea or coffee?"

"Neither, thank you, sir; I have some milk. See," she said, holding up a bottle of generous proportions.

"Ah, you are well supplied. Are you quite sure you will need nothing? I believe I must have a cup of coffee."

"O, indeed, I shall not! Please do not get any thing to eat. I have plenty for both of us. Just see," removing the snowy napkin, and displaying the sandwiches, cake, pie, and fruit. Part of it was intended for you, Dr. Parker. You know I could never eat all this."

"But you haven't the least idea to what an unlimited extent I shall make inroads upon your supply. Don't I look like a gormandizer?"

"Not a bit. But eat all you like, please," she said, in a pretty, pleading tone; "I shall need very little. My milk will be quite enough for me."

"Thank you," was the laughing reply; "your generosity is unequalled. I think, however, if you will excuse me, I will get a cup of coffee, and return immediately to enjoy it in connection with your tempting offer."

She nodded assent, and he hurried away.

He was gone but a moment ; then was just reseating himself, coffee-cup in hand, when he exclaimed,

“ Ah, here are our friends ! Now for the famous introduction.”

Composing his face into an expression of becoming dignity, he exchanged a smiling salutation with his ruddy-faced friend, who, advancing, followed by the diminutive figure of his wife, stepped aside, and, with a gentle courtesy, as deferential as would have been his manner to a queen, said,

“ Permit me, Dr. Parker, to make you acquainted with my wife, Mrs. Horton. My dear,” he continued, “ no doubt you will recognize this gentleman as the one who, not long ago, performed for us an illy requited service.”

The words, “ my wife,” were spoken in the tone of a man who was intensely pleased with and proud of his newly acquired possession, almost in the manner of a child with a just-received toy, while the allusion was so pointed as to call up a suspicion of a blush to the sallow cheek of his companion.

Dr. Parker extended his hand, and acknowledged the introduction with his usual urbanity of manner, and then, turning to Alice, said,

“ This is Miss Alice Hamilton, the daughter of an old friend and parishioner of my own, who is *en route* to school in Boston.”

The little woman, although somewhat embarrassed, in passing through such a trying ordeal, deported

herself in a lady-like way, and they proceeded to seat themselves *vis-a-vis* to Dr. Parker and Alice. Opening a basket of huge dimensions, Mr. Horton asked,

“Did you ever find any thing fit to eat in a restaurant, sir?” Bah! their fare is fit only for the lower animals.”

“Well, sir,” replied the gentleman addressed, “you know members of my profession are often obliged to travel, and, of course, are dependent upon such places for the sustenance which we all need, and I feel that, in justice to the fraternity, I ought to acknowledge that it might be worse, much worse.”

“You are guarded, sir, in your expressions, or else your experience has been much pleasanter than mine. I do not hesitate to call it execrable. Execrable!” he repeated. “My little wife is a famous cook, and when I leave home, she gets me up a luncheon fit for a king, so I snap my fingers, metaphorically, at the whole herd of *restaurateurs*, and dine sumptuously on the contents of my basket.”

“My husband is partial,” said the smiling little woman by his side, evidently pleased, as what woman is not, at words of praise from one she loves; “he only imagines that my cooking is better than that of others.”

“Not so, Bessie,” he answered, giving her an affectionate look. “And, to test the matter, I challenge Dr. Parker’s opinion. You know ‘the cloth’

are, proverbially, men of good judgment on these matters."

"You and Miss Alice must considerably overrate my gastronomical capacity," replied the clergyman, smiling. "You see," pointing to Alice's basket, "the task she has already assigned me."

"Nevertheless, I cannot consent to lose the verdict of a judge so competent to decide a question of such magnitude. Is not your interior arrangement constructed of India-rubber? In that case it may be extended for my express accommodation."

"Now, Rufus," expostulated his wife, laying her wrinkled hand gently on his arm, "don't insist upon Dr. Parker doing that which he doesn't wish to do. It is unmannerly."

"Unmannerly! O no, my dear wife; only impressive. Now, dominie, do try this slice of cake; it will melt in your mouth."

Alice, also, was obliged to accept a generous slice of the delicious-looking compound, and was fain to own that it was decidedly rich, and of a fine, delicate flavor.

"My judgment most heartily approves of your husband's decision, madam," said Dr. Parker, with a courteous bow. "I have seldom, even at a wedding, or when compounded by a professed confectioner, partaken of any thing more delicious."

"Thank you," she replied, simply. "Rufus is very fond of good things, and I try to gratify his taste."

“Try to tickle my palate, eh? Isn't she a jewel?”

“Perhaps she shrewdly judges that to be the nearest and surest avenue to your pocket,” said the minister, laughing. “Pardon me, Mrs. Horton, but I also am a married man, and have had some experience in that line.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the delighted husband. “Ap-
ropos of pockets, was the little affair of this morning satisfactory?”

“Entirely so, but I confess that it presents a problem to my mind which taxes my mathematical powers severely.”

Looking at his wife with a comical glance, he answered,

“Well, sir, you may remember that the amount which I placed in your hand on that memorable evening was small, ridiculously small; but it was a whim of mine, sir, a mere whim. I am a man of whims, and I chuckled to myself and Mrs. Horton, as I imagined the blank expression which would pass over your face when your eyes met the insignificant one on the face of my poor little offering. But I did not mean it should rest there, and I amused myself by planning the sequel which I intended should follow.”

“Yes,” said his wife, laughing, “he would pay no attention to me. He must carry out his odd fancy to the very last.”

“Well, my dear, my odd fancy, as you are pleased

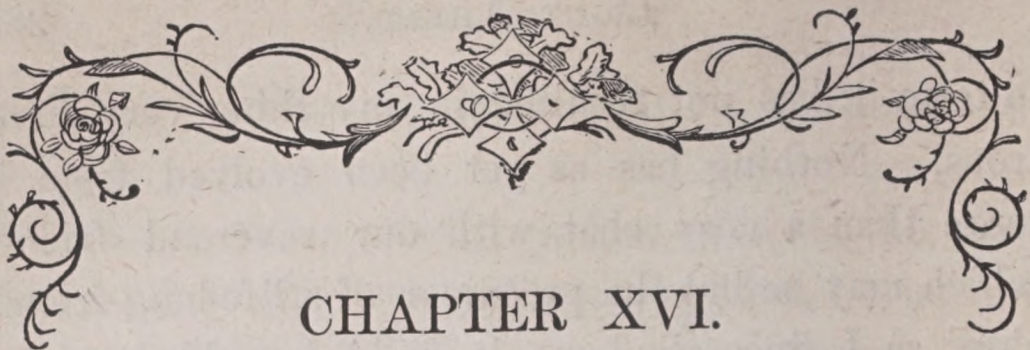
to term it, has not resulted in any thing very disastrous. Nothing has as yet been evolved from it more than a cozy chat with our reverend friend, which may be but the precursor of a life-long friendship, as I sincerely hope it will," he added, with a bow.

The doctor replied only by an answering bow and smile, and Mr. Horton continued,

"But, my dear sir, permit me to explain myself. I am a great admirer of the fair sisterhood, and pleased myself by fancying the gratification with which your good lady, who, I presume, in common with all other clergymen's wives, is the recipient of her husband's marriage fees, would accept the somewhat more reasonable sum, which I hope will find its way to her purse. I hope she will adorn her pretty person with it, to her heart's content and her husband's unqualified admiration."

"I will thank you, sir, in her name; and allow me to assure you that she shall not long remain in ignorance of your generous gift—"

"Stop, sir, stop!" he interrupted. "Not a gift, only a grateful acknowledgment of an act which crowned the happiest day of my life."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE October day was drawing to its close. Already the lights of the city were glimmering in the distance, and the hum of its busy sounds beginning to fall upon the ear. Alice, wearied with the long ride and the chill night air, had considerably lowered her mental as well as her physical thermometer. Thoughts of home would intrude upon her, struggle as she might against them, and she found some difficulty in swallowing down the lump which would persist in rising in her throat.

She had been very much amused by Mr. Horton's sprightly and, to her, somewhat unusual style of conversation, and had remained almost a silent listener, forming her own conclusions, after her quiet fashion, and occasionally taking up the broken threads of the morning.

Almost before she was aware the train was in the depot, and she found herself in the midst of the hurrying crowd—jostled from side to side by those who are always eager to secure the first place. Mr. and Mrs. Horton had taken a cordial leave of Dr. Parker, after having invited him to make their house his home during his stay in the city, an invitation which he politely declined, as he preferred the freedom

of hotel life to the restraints which visiting always imposes.

Now that the diversion of their society had passed, and she stood, after night-fall, alone with Dr. Parker, the almost deafening shouts of porters and carriage drivers resounding in her ears, her bravery tottered for a moment, but soon regained itself, as her companion said, in brisk, lively tones,

“Cheer up, Miss Alice, you will soon be with your friends, and have an opportunity to rest after this wearisome day.”

“There is Mrs. Ormsbee, now!” she exclaimed, eagerly, as she caught a glimpse of her friend’s kind face, and heard the delighted exclamations of Nellie and Maud, who had accompanied her. The recognition had been nearly simultaneous, and, hastening forward, she soon found herself inclosed in their warm embraces, with numberless kisses upon her brow, cheeks, and lips.

Dr. Parker, after taking a birds’-eye view of the slender, lady-like figure, in its sable robes, immediately formed his opinion of Alice’s friends and of her probable surroundings—at least, so far as to judge that her mother’s most tender solicitation would have nothing to dread for her in a residence with one whose appearance bespoke the refined, cultured lady.

Taking advantage of Maud’s prolonged and enthusiastic greeting, he stepped forward and extending his hand with a bow, said,

"Mrs. Ormsbee, I am quite sure. Allow me to introduce myself as Alice's escort."

"Dr. Parker," replied the lady, accepting the offered hand, with a graceful inclination, "I am most happy to meet you, and return my thanks for your kindness to my little friend. It is quite evident that she has not suffered from inattention during her ride to day."

"Pardon me, madam," he replied, raising his hand as though to ward off her thanks; "not a word; not a syllable upon that subject. I should feel like a defaulter—appropriating funds which do not belong to him, I assure you. I should be receiving that to which I have no possible claim; for, indeed, I have been the obliged party. I have been most delightfully entertained by yonder intelligent little girl."

Mrs. Ormsbee smiled, and was about to reply, when Alice came shyly forward, saying, with a little embarrassed laugh,

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Parker, I ought to have introduced you to my friend, Mrs. Ormsbee." Then, turning to the lady, she continued, "I am very much ashamed of myself for my rudeness."

"Never mind, dear," replied Mrs. Ormsbee; "Dr. Parker has already performed that ceremony for himself; so don't feel badly about it. But, come, the carriage is waiting, and both driver and horses will become impatient if we keep them waiting much longer."

Dr. Parker accompanied them to the carriage, and, after assisting them in, said,

“Miss Alice’s trunk has received due attention, and will probably be delivered in the morning.”

He was about closing the door and making his adieu, when Mrs. Ormsbee laid her hand upon it to prevent the action.

“No, no, Dr. Parker,” she said, pleasantly, “here is a reserved seat, I pray you take it and accompany us home to dinner.”

He hesitated a moment, framing in his mind a polite and yet a truthful refusal, when she rejoined,

“I assure you, I can accept no refusal. We have set our hearts upon having Dr. Parker for a guest, and he surely will not disappoint us. My husband has been quite ill for a week or two, and is just in that stage of convalescence when he is pining for some person upon whom he can vent his argumentative proclivities. I have exhausted all my resources, but, I believe, he thinks me a very inferior theologian. I tried to act as a safety-valve to carry off the surplus theological steam, of which he always has an abundant supply, but my poor powers have proved utterly inadequate to the emergency. He is waiting this moment, I have no doubt, with the keenest anxiety for the arrival of a disputant of superior caliber. If there is one thing that delights poor Fred’s soul more than another, I believe it is a theological discussion.”

“That is promising!” replied Dr. Parker. “It certainly promises a test of my skill as a theologian, and rather a severe one, I fear. Your invitation is becoming most attractive, Mrs. Ormsbee; I accept your challenge, and will try ecclesiastical tilts with your husband with pleasure. I also must confess to a liking for that sort of thing, and this opportunity is beyond my powers of resistance.”

“I am delighted!” was the animated reply. “Fred says my powers of persuasion are irresistible, and, you know, I am in duty bound to believe my husband.”

“Certainly,” he answered, laughing; “and I am going to prove to him that he is correct in his assertion. If he is equally so in his theological premises, I may find myself vanquished.”

“O, Allie!” exclaimed Nellie, after a moment’s silence, “we had a letter from Aunt Annie yesterday, and she says that Uncle Ned has taken Tony in hand, and is going to help him learn to read, and papa has promised him that, if he will be a good boy, and try hard, he will bring him here and let him go to school, and then, if he is at all smart, he may enter his office and read law. Just imagine poor, ragged Tony turning out a great lawyer. He might. Isn’t that true, mamma?”

“Certainly,” was the reply. “Some of our greatest men have risen from antecedents as obscure as his.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Parker, “I once heard a history of one of our foreign ministers, which interested me very much, as an illustration of the fact that innate intellectual power cannot remain hidden, or trammelled by the circumstances with which it finds itself environed. This man was the son of a Western farmer, in the days when the West was not what it is now—a vast emporium of produce which finds its way to all parts of the country; a section whose cities vie in wealth and magnificence with those of the older States of the Union. This was in the days when the West, where he first woke to life—the far West—was but a few, bare, scattering villages and immense farms, the cultivation of whose broad, rich acres was the highest ambition of their owners.

“This boy, however, was endowed by Heaven with a capacity, and a corresponding desire for something higher than following the plow, or driving the cows home and milking them. His father, who had spent all his life in turning with his plow the ‘sluggish clod,’ desired nothing higher for his son, and possessed no means of gratifying his ambition, had it existed. So the poor lad was kept at his distasteful employment. But intellect laughs at obstacles, and the boy was determined to break the fetters which enthralled him. There is one thing, young ladies, of which we may be morally certain. There is somewhere in this vast universe a spot upon which God designs that we shall stand. It may be on the highest

pinnacle of intellectual attainment, of military fame, of statesmanship, or whatever field of glory you choose to imagine, or it may be on a much lower plane, but in either case we are, in a certain sense, responsible for the position which we occupy. If we are content to remain, with the muck-rake in our hands, raking in the mire and filth of earth, we shall not be coerced into a higher sphere; but if that which is within us impels and forces us to a nobler and worthier ambition, rest assured we shall find assistance. In other words, 'God helps those who help themselves.' Well, this boy decided that the farm, while it might be a very good place, and farming a highly necessary occupation, presented no sphere of action for him. What should he do? Books he had none, not even a Bible. Of teachers he had the same meager supply. But the voice within him was calling, in trumpet tones, 'Go on! don't give up!' After calm and mature deliberation his course was decided upon. He called upon the minister of the little hamlet nearest his father's farm and represented his case to him, requesting the loan of some books. His request was cheerfully granted, and the good man's library placed at his disposal. How do you think he studied those books? In a well-warmed, well-lighted library, with all its accessories to ease and comfort? No, no; not so!"

"I know!" exclaimed Maud. "He sat by the kitchen fire, and studied by the light of a tallow candle."

"Not so bad," answered the minister, laughing heartily. "You are warm, O! very warm, as I have heard children say when they were playing 'hide and seek,' but you will have to guess again."

"I don't know," said Maud, "I'm sure, if that isn't right."

"What do you say, Miss Alice?" he asked, somewhat curious to know what her theory would be.

"Perhaps he got up as soon as it was light and studied, or may be by fire-light, or moonlight."

"You are famous guessers," he replied, laughing. "I think you must have been born in the land of wooden nutmegs. No, Miss Alice, he did not study by moonlight, but your other suggestions are pretty nearly correct. He did rise very early, but was obliged to go immediately to his work on the farm. He managed, however, to find time, by curtailing his nooning, to go to the woods and secure pine-knots, or to the meadows for rushes, which he hoarded up for future use. When the days became short, and he could not see to read or study after his hard day's work, which would have sent most boys to bed to forget their fatigues in sleep, he would light his pine-knot or his rush, and placing it in the capacious fireplace, stretch himself at full length upon the floor, face downward, and study all the books which he could borrow from the doctor and the lawyer, as well as from his ministerial friend."

"Of course, those libraries were extremely limited, "

altogether probably not comprising as many volumes as one of our city professional men can number. But he was not satisfied with this achievement. The thirst for knowledge, now awakened, was insatiable, and would not be easily slacked. So, barefoot and without a dollar in the world, he walked to the nearest college, a distance of several hundred miles, and being admitted to an audience with the president, he interested that gentleman so much that he promised him that his perseverance should be rewarded by as liberal an education as it was in the power of the institution to bestow. It was proposed that he should assume the post of janitor's assistant, sweeping, making fires, blacking boots, etc., as some slight payment for his board and tuition. He gratefully accepted the proposition and entered at once upon his duties. Considerable surprise was manifested at the manner in which he passed his examination, particularly at his familiarity with certain subjects, upon which utter ignorance would have been far less a matter of wonder. Well, to cut my long story short, he passed through most creditably, and was graduated with high honors. He subsequently entered a law school, became a prominent lawyer in his own State, which by this time had assumed more respectable proportions as a State; was sent to Congress by the district in which he resided, and, finally, received an appointment as minister to some foreign court. Relate this story to the little boy in question,

Miss Alice, and tell him that the whole broad realm of learning is before him, and that in this country, whose motto is equal brotherhood and equal rights, he may reach the highest point, if he possesses sufficient perseverance and well-directed energy."

Thus, in pleasant conversation, they rode onward until the carriage entered the inclosure within which Mr. Ormsbee's residence stood. Before the carriage stopped, Fannie's merry voice was heard, as she came bounding down the steps of the broad piazza, and in a trice Alice was the recipient of a vigorous embrace, and several resounding kisses.

"O, Allie!" she exclaimed, impetuously, "I wanted so much to go to meet you, and get the first kiss, but mamma would not allow me to, because she said Dr.—"

"Fan," cried Nellie, approaching quickly, "do let Alice go into the house; she will take cold out here."

Fannie was silenced, and, catching her sister's warning gesture, saw, for the first time, Dr. Parker, standing within earshot of her voice.

The new-comers were taken right into this hospitable Christian home and made to feel as though their places had been awaiting them, and they alone were perfectly adapted to them. This was, indeed, a home, the heads of which, in all their intercourse with others, aimed always to act in accordance with

the principle of Saint Paul, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." They sought the building up of the spiritual edifice, whose corner-stone is Christ Jesus. How much exists in the power of Christian courtesy to clear away harassing doubts, to reassure the diffident, to place the timid at ease, or to smooth the ruffled plumage.

Mr. Ormsbee took his place at the head of the well-appointed dinner table, with its sumptuous viands, for the first time in two weeks. After assuming her place as hostess, his wife said, playfully,

"My dear, I have warned Dr. Parker of your strong argumentative proclivities, and he is prepared to grapple with them, so I advise you to get your mental gymnastics in good order."

"Dr. Parker and I may so nearly agree," he replied, with a pleasant smile and bow, "that I shall not require my mental gymnastics, as you call them."

"Never fear," she retorted, gayly, "you will be sure to find some peg on which you can hang an argument."

"I am going to preach a sermon to-morrow morning," replied the clergyman, turning toward Mrs. Ormsbee, with a smile, "in which, I am afraid, your husband will find but few pegs. I regret exceedingly that I had not prepared one which would have fur-

nished him wider scope for his controversial powers. However, as I am in utter ignorance of his views, I am not prepared to speak definitely."

"Where do you hold forth to-morrow?" inquired Mr. Ormsbee.

"I have been honored with an invitation to preach at the Old South Church."

"My dear," said Mrs. Ormsbee, "do you feel equal to riding so far?"

"By all means," he replied. "Please ring the bell, and we will order the carriage to-night, in order that there may be no delay. Dr. Parker will wish to be at church in good season."

"That reminds me, sir," said the latter, looking at his watch, "that I have several things to attend to, and, with your permission, will take my departure, but hope to see you again before I take my final leave."

"By no means," answered the host. "I insist that you make my house your home as long as pleases you. Go and come according to your own convenience."

"Now, doctor," interposed the lively little hostess, "you recollect your promise?"

"My promise!"

"Yes, sir. Did you not promise to prove my husband's assertion to be true? I shall think it only half proven if you leave us now."

"You have triumphed," was the laughing rejoinder.

der. "I shall most certainly prove it, beyond controversy."

"Be sure you do, or I shall use my wifely influence to induce him to withdraw the case from your hands, and become the client of a more skillful jurist."

On the following morning Dr. Parker, Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbee, and Alice took an early start to attend the service at which the former was to officiate. Nellie, having been indisposed for a day or two, remained at home, with Fannie for a companion.

As they rode along the exhilarating air of the bright October morning seemed fresh from the fountain of life and purity, while the soft Sabbath stillness breathed a holy calm into the heart that was surely born of a higher sphere.

After being seated Alice glanced around her, and a strange feeling of loneliness settled upon her as, save the two kind faces beside her, she looked only upon those whose features were utterly unfamiliar. When Dr. Parker ascended to the pulpit, however, a glad thrill tingled through every nerve. She had attended upon his ministrations since her earliest recollection, and now he came to her as a harbinger of glad tidings. She had always loved and respected him almost beyond expression, but she now looked upon his noble, spiritual face with a much warmer affection, and a sense of proprietorship which comforted and soothed her. She felt as though he

belonged to her, a connecting link between her own heart and those which were beating in unison with it in the great Gotham from which she came. His prayer was an exponent of her own thought. It comprised a petition for all classes, all who needed the Father's mercy, the Saviour's mediatorial office, the Spirit's sanctifying power; the stranger, he, who far from home and kindred, found his thoughts turning, with fond longing, toward the scenes of his childhood's home.

At the close of the preliminary services he read his text, in clear, ringing tones: "For we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The discourse was a beautiful elaboration of the sentiment of the text.

There was but little disposition for conversation manifested during the drive home, the thoughts just presented apparently engrossing all minds.

At dinner the bright, smiling Mrs. Ormsbee had been watching her husband's face with much curiosity. Dr. Parker had forewarned him that his sermon would afford him but little controversial scope; yet she was wondering if he were not taking up each thread with microscopic precision, and trying to weave a tissue, in whose meshes he might find that for which he sought, the theme of, at least, a seeming dissimilarity of views.

"Fred is the best man in the world," she thought,

“but he does love to make believe he differs from every body else, whether he does or not. I wonder what he’s thinking about now. I’ll warrant he’s building up some theory that will afford him the opportunity I know he’s aching for.”





CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. ORMSBEE'S patience was not very severely tried. After the dessert was placed upon the table her husband's cogitations exhaled themselves like perfume from a flower.

"Well, doctor," he began, "you spoke truly. You did, indeed, disarm me; you left me utterly pegless, in fact. But what is better, much better, you have furnished me with food for pleasant and profitable contemplation. There was no room for quibble from alpha to omega. The points were well put and ably maintained, while the application was—well, just what it should be. So, notwithstanding the carping disposition for which my wife gives me credit, I find myself utterly without grounds for its exercise."

"Not carping, Fred, dear," answered the lady, "only a wee bit of the quality which phrenologists would dignify by the name of causality. You do love to reason."

"And with good effect," he replied, laughing, "if my reason guided me in the prosecution of my matrimonial affairs."

"Speaking of matrimonial affairs," rejoined Dr. Parker, "reminds me of a somewhat singular couple

whom I had the pleasure of launching on that broad sea a few weeks ago."

He then related the story with which we are already familiar, with such furbishing of words and gestures as made its recital extremely ludicrous. From the wedding, in his own parlors, to the accidental meeting on the train, nothing was omitted; the pittance of a fee, and its subsequent munificent addition, all were detailed. Just as he was finishing his narrative a vigorous pull of the door-bell announced the arrival of visitors.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormsbee, "that must be Aunt Betsey and Uncle Rufus, for no one else ever comes on the Sabbath."

"Aunt Betsey and Uncle Rufus!" Like a flash of lightning it darted through Dr. Parker's head that these were the very names by which he had heard the parties of whom he had been speaking address each other. Aunt and uncle of his kind entertainers! Had he said any thing which, upon reflection, he would regret?

He glanced at Alice to see if she recognized the coincidence, and read at once in her speaking face the confirmation of his thought. He could recall nothing unkind in his remarks, but was fearful that in his love of fun and pleasantry he might have allowed this propensity too loose a rein, and indulged in some expressions which might wound a sensitive heart—a thing of which he would not be guilty, for

ten thousand times the value of the bank note with which, on the morrow, he hoped to delight Susy's heart. These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and by the time the veritable couple made their appearance, he had regained his equanimity.

"Ah! Dr. Parker, good-evening, sir; good-evening," exclaimed Mr. Horton, advancing toward him. "I had not the most remote idea of our rare, good fortune in meeting you. I was not aware, sir, that your destination was the house of my good niece and nephew here."

"Nor was I aware of it, sir; but the invitation of your good niece and nephew was so pressing, and withal so captivating, that I was very much in the condition of the moth who could not resist the light. Not, however, with like consequences," he added, laughing, as it struck him that his comparison might not be very flattering.

"Ah! you blockhead," he said to himself. "You are determined to put your foot into it to-night. What has got into your silly pate?"

These words were an aside, for his own benefit exclusively, and so, simultaneously with their indulgence, he added, aloud,

"I am most happy to meet you, sir; as also your good lady."

"Mary, dear, I never told you of my joke on the doctor, did I?" asked Mr. Horton.

"No, uncle, you never did; but if it is like all the

practical jokes I ever knew you to play, it resulted in some good, I am sure."

"Ask the doctor," he replied, laughing heartily; "ask the doctor."

"Excuse me, sir," answered that gentleman; "it would please me to hear your version of the matter. I am confident you are better qualified to do it justice than I."

Just as he was giving his preliminary *ahem*, Fannie exclaimed, breathlessly,

"O! mamma, Nellie has fainted."

Mrs. Ormsbee hastened to the adjoining parlor, where she found her daughter in a deathly swoon, fixed and rigid as though the icy hand were already laid upon her vitals. Restoratives were immediately applied, and although animation continued for a long time suspended, yet the bodily functions began slowly to resume their several offices, and consciousness returned.

Having carried her to her room, Mr. Ormsbee returned to his guests, while his wife and Aunt Betsey remained in charge of the sick girl.

"Where have I been?" she asked, in a bewildered tone, gazing around her, like one just awaking from a sound slumber. Then recognizing those around her, she said, in faint tones: "O, mamma, I must have dreamed I was in heaven. Weren't papa and Dr. Parker talking about it?" she asked, with an effort at recollection.

"Yes," was the reply; "they were talking over the doctor's sermon."

"That must have been what I heard just as I went off. It seemed to me I was going there."

"Well, dear," was her mother's soothing answer, "you have been overtaxed of late, and not quite well. You will be all right in the morning. Aren't you glad Aunt Betsey is here, Nellie?"

"Yes," she replied, holding out her hand. "Dear Aunt Betsey, I am always glad to see her. She is like a ray of sunshine."

Seeing their patient sink into a gentle slumber, the two ladies descended to the parlor, where they were assailed by a host of questions.

"She'll be better in the morning," said Aunt Betsey, "but it always touches me when there is anything the matter with Nellie. I am always inclined to be fearful. She is so delicate and so lovely, that it seems to me she is almost too good to live."

"Now, Aunt Betsey," said Mr Ormsbee, "doesn't that savor a little of old-time superstition? God doesn't take away all the good people, else here would be a trio of as disconsolate widowers as ever drew breath."

"Disconsolate!" repeated Mrs. Ormsbee. "How long would it be, think you, before you would be breathing vows of eternal constancy to sweet sixteen?"

"Bah! Please give us credit for better sense, if

you must scandalize us. Now, aunty, I appeal to you. Are you going to sit here quietly and hear our sex traduced with the light of your experience blazing before your eyes?"

"No," she replied, smiling, and casting a look full of trusting confidence toward her husband. "It would illy become me to doubt the constancy of your sex. Men are sometimes true to their first love, Mary, dear."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Horton. "How about your own sex, Mary? Are they immaculate, think you?"

"Not immaculate, uncle; but, as a rule, I think they are more constant. However, I grant you that there are some noble examples in your own, and many lamentable failures in ours. So that I imagine it is, as the Englishman would say, about '’alf an' ’alf.'"

Entering the library the next morning before breakfast, Mr. Ormsbee found Dr. Parker and the three little girls assembled there.

"Ah! good-morning," he said. "You have the start of me. My wife was a little uneasy about Nellie, and our rest was somewhat broken."

"I hope she is much better this morning."

"Much better, thanks. O, I think all she requires is a little rest and quiet. Not being very strong, she is easily overcome, but I believe a day will set her all right."

"I sincerely hope so."

Drawing Alice toward him in a fatherly embrace, and imprinting a kiss upon her cheek, Mr. Ormsbee said,

"And how is Miss Snow-drop this morning? Remember, you are my daughter now, and I shall christen you as I please. Does that name please you?"

"Yes, sir," she answered; "I am glad, though, that you didn't call me White Rose."

"And why not White Rose, pray?"

"Because that is papa's name for me, and I could not allow any one else to use it."

"Ah! ha! Well, it shall be Snow-drop, then. Now, Snow-drop, do you know that you are to be perfectly at home here? In all respects like my own children? I allow them free access to this room and all there is in it, with the simple proviso, that when a book is removed from the shelves it shall be returned in as good order as when taken. That is right, is it not, doctor?"

"Perfectly so," was the ready reply.

"Now then," he proceeded, playfully, "having the approbation and concurrence of your spiritual adviser, I 'continner,' as Widow Bedott would say. You are at perfect liberty to come here at all hours, to read, write, study, or think, just as the mood seizes you, provided you do not infringe upon the laws of health. I require my daughters to take care of the

physical structure," he added, turning to Dr. Parker, "believing that to be the only true way to insure mental vigor and elasticity."

"I rejoice to hear you say so," replied the doctor, "as that is my only fear for my little friend."

The bell now summoned them to partake of the morning meal, but before releasing Alice from his embrace, Mr. Ormsbee said,

"Now remember, I am your second father, and I hope to gain a daughter's love. Is it a compact?"

"O yes, sir," she answered, with beaming eyes. "I think I shall be very happy here."

"It shall not be our fault if you are not, my dear child," he replied, as they entered the breakfast-room.

An hour after the meal had been dispatched Dr. Parker sought Alice in the library, where she sat curled up in the lap of a capacious arm-chair, deep in the pages of a Roman History, which she had taken from the shelves merely to look over, but so absorbed had she become that she was utterly unaware of his approach until he laid one hand upon her head, and, extending the other, said,

"Well, daughter, I have come to say farewell. I shall miss my *compagnon du voyage* very much. What message to the Gothamites?"

"O, sir," she answered, raising her beautiful eyes to his face, "please tell them that I am very well, that every body is very kind to me, and that I am going to be brave and study ever so hard, so that I may realize

all their expectations. I don't mean that any body shall be disappointed in me," she added, trying to smile, and forcing back the tears which were glistening in her eyes. "And O, Dr. Parker, if papa—" then overcome by emotion she paused.

"I understand you, my dear child," he replied, with a depth of feeling almost equal to her own; "and I promise you that if any change takes place it shall be my sacred duty to keep you informed of it, and, if need be, to come myself and take you home."

"Thank you," was her reply, given with restored firmness of tone. "O! how kind you are. I trust you entirely, Dr. Parker, and will try not to be anxious unless I hear directly from you. I know mamma would not let me know if papa were worse, except in case of immediate danger, for fear of worrying me."

"You may trust me; and now, good-bye, I have only time to catch the train. Give me a kiss, and remember that the God of the covenant, your father's God, will be yours also. I know of no more comprehensive blessing than that which the Lord himself pronounced upon his chosen people by the mouth of his servant Aaron:

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'"

Taking up a Bible which lay upon a table by his side, he said,

“You will find it here in Numbers vi, 24-26. Let us read it together.”

He drew her toward a lounge, and seating himself beside her, they scanned in unison the pages of God's holy word. The man of letters, of rare intellectual ability, of high position in the Church militant, and the tender child of scarce one fourth his years, untaught in the wisdom of the schools, of *savants* or sages, but instructed, he had not a doubt, by the Holy Spirit, the great Teacher, without whose training the soul is ignorant indeed, though possessed of all the philosophy and learning of earth. He closed the book, and, with a silent kiss and a pressure of the tiny hand, he was gone.

Nellie's temporary illness placed a check upon Alice's eager ambition. So anxious was she to commence her course of study, that each day appeared to contain double its number of allotted hours. The time was not lost, however, for she had informed Mr. Ormsbee of Dr. Parker's advice in regard to reading matter, and requested him to select for her such books as he deemed most instructive and profitable.

With rare good judgment he placed in her hands, with due regard to series, such works as were best adapted to her age and sex; works replete with general information, never to be gleaned from textbooks. She had promised him that she would touch nothing, however attractive in appearance, without

his advice or permission, and with her usual punctilious adherence to her word, she strictly kept her promise.

Maud and Fannie met with repeated refusals in their importunities for her company in the play-room, yet, when she did join them, no one entered with more zest into the pastime of the hour. Mr. Ormsbee's well-kept garden was a source of unfailing pleasure to her, and from its fragrant messengers she drew many a lesson of sweetness and gentleness, making companions of them, talking to them, as she confessed to having done at Rodman Farm, and trying to emulate their real or fancied excellences.

"Come, Alice!" said Fannie, one afternoon, "Maud and I are going out for a walk, and we want you to go, too."

"O, Fannie, please excuse me," she answered, scarcely looking up from the page she was reading. "I would much rather finish this chapter. I want to tell Mr. Ormsbee about it when he comes home."

"Go, dear," said Mrs. Ormsbee, entering the room at that moment; "you have not been out of the house to-day. A walk to the Common will freshen you up. Too much application is harmful, you know, little girl; and as I am joint custodian of this frail little casket, I must see that it is kept in proper condition to enshrine its precious jewel. Go, get your hat; Maud and Fannie are all ready. See! here they come, and you know they are none too patient.

Nellie is improving so rapidly that I think next week will see you all regularly employed at your school work."

A brisk walk in the fresh air sent them all home laughing and chattering like magpies. Alice had the satisfaction of finishing her chapter before Mr. Ormsbee's return, and was rewarded with a full and interesting explanation of it.

The longest and most tedious probation must at last come to an end; and Alice, at the expiration of hers, joyfully accepted her position as a student in Professor Nugent's Institute for Young Ladies. Her examination had proved entirely satisfactory, and she entered upon a much higher plane than she ever dared to hope. The weeks flew on apace, each one freighted with its usual cargo of school-girl experiences. October's gorgeous beauty paled and closed its dying eye upon the lap of drear November, whose wailing winds and sobbing breath stripped the foliage from the trees, and brought blankness and desolation to the bare, brown earth.

And now the festal month begins to shed its halo of delighted anticipation over young and old, the mature and the undeveloped, the fair and those to whom nature has been more meager of her personal gifts. All are preparing for the grand festival of the year, the celebration of the natal day of the Lord of life and light, who became incarnate for the redemption of a lost world.

The girls at school were allowed to occupy their noon hour in the manufacture of various dainty little articles which were to be kept secret from the home circle until the eventful day. Mysterious little packages were being surreptitiously conveyed into the house and secreted, and each face wore a look of important secrecy, as if to say, "Don't talk to me, I am too busy."

The home correspondence was unfailing in its punctuality, and favorable reports kept the mind of the little student free from anxiety. One morning, when the postman made his rounds, the usual missive came, but in Mabel's delicate chirography.

"We are all as well as usual, darling," she wrote, "and are frequently wondering what Alice is doing. We lead a very quiet life, you know; and so there is not much news to be communicated. But you are not a newsmonger, and, I know, care only to hear about those whom you love. There is one item, however, that I must tell you. There have been several heavy failures here, and among those who have gone down with an immense crash is the house of Wentworth & Co. Rumor says that they have lost every thing, being very heavily involved, and cannot pay ten cents on the dollar. Papa is much the same, cheerful and patient as ever. He is always eager to receive your letters, and reads them with much satisfaction. Of course, we all feel that way, but to him it is an especial comfort and pleasure.

There is no necessity of my rehearsing mamma's praises; they are too familiar to you to need repetition. I don't think she is like old wine, growing better with age, for really I see no room for improvement. Dr. Monroe says I must tell you that he looks very much less like a blushing peony than when you last saw him. He declares he is emulating the snow-drop, and is becoming as sylph-like as—as— Well, I cannot wait any longer for his sluggish brain to produce its thought, and as he is decidedly at a loss for a metaphor, he supplies—as yourself. He hopes, in time, he says, by continuing his process of judicious starvation, to merit even your fastidious approbation and—admiration. What a case he is! I believe we should all stagnate if it were not for him. Dear, good auntie sends you the inclosed, which she hopes you will not consider as a Christmas present, but that you will accept and spend as best pleases you. She stipulates, however, that it shall not all be spent on every body else, but on your own dear self."

"There is another person, who shall be nameless, sitting by, saying, 'Give my best love to Alice, and tell her that I claim from her a sister's love in return.' Give it to him, Alice, darling, for I am going to whisper a secret to this sheet which, in turn, will whisper it in your ears. He deserves it, and is very dear to the heart of your sister

MABEL."

Alice opened a tiny envelope which was inclosed in her sister's letter, and brought to view two shining half eagles.

"Just see what auntie has sent me!" she exclaimed. "Ten dollars! to be spent just as I please."

"I wish papa would send me ten dollars," said Maud. "Do you know, Aunt Mary, I have spent my last cent?"

"What would you do with it, Maud?" asked her uncle. "Buy out the first confectioner on your way to school, I'll warrant. I don't believe you could possibly pass the door if there were a poor little solitary nickel in your pocket."

"Indeed I could, Uncle Fred. I have done it many a time, even when the things in the windows were ever so tempting; but to punish you for suspecting me of so low a motive, I sha'n't tell you what I have done with the money I saved by shutting my eyes as I passed all the good things."

"Ha! ha!" laughed her uncle. "What a self-sacrificing martyr you are becoming, Maud. Keep on, and you will win a record on the historic page."

"O, Maud!" exclaimed Alice, glancing over her letter the second time, "Mabel says that Lou Wentworth's father has failed, and lost every thing."

"Serves her right!" said downright Maud. "Poor thing! I'm sorry for her, too. It wasn't kind to express myself as I did, I know, Aunt Mary; but she *is* such an upstart. I am afraid," she added, as her

generous nature re-asserted itself, "she'll find people who will look down upon her now."

Although Alice enjoyed the preparations for the Christmas festivities, which were in brisk progress, her heart turned, with a kind of sad longing, toward home. She had expected to spend the last week of the year with those whom she loved best on earth; but the Boston party had been so importunate in their pleadings for her to remain with them, and share their tree and its fruits, that a reluctant consent had been given. There would be a vacation in the spring, and to that she was forced to transfer her anticipations.

Rodman Farm had not withheld its contributions to the general fund, and a box arrived in due time, which they all declared was still redolent of the pine woods.

Although the hearts of the home circle were freshly bleeding at this season, which awakens so many memories, yet they agreed with Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbee that this day of Christian festivity should be, to the younger members of the household, a time of cheer and innocent rejoicing, unmarred by their own unavailing sorrow for one who would have entered with so keen a zest into its sports.

Mr. Horton's spirited steeds were often seen standing before the Ormsbee Mansion, and certain ominous-looking packages were handed in to the obsequious waiter, who had received previous instructions where all such parcels were to be deposited.

The day before Christmas Aunt Betsey made her appearance, soon after breakfast, and was locked with Mrs. Ormsbee in the library nearly all day, neither lady being visible except at luncheon, when Fan's eager tongue made numerous tripping excursions to the matter in hand, but she could elicit no information, all her questions receiving monosyllabic replies, or none at all. The Sphinx herself could scarcely have been more non-committal than were her provoking auditors.

Alice had taken Mrs. Ormsbee into her counsels, and under her judicious advice her expenditures were made with taste and skill, seasoned with a due regard for economy. In only one point did she prove refractory, insisting that every one should have a share, until her funds were exhausted.

The day had been spent in playing games, and in such diversions as were at hand to while away the tedium which expectancy always engenders; yet the hours dragged somewhat heavily, as each one wondered what particular genus of fruit the tree would bear for her.

At last, as if in pity for their restless impatience, darkness settled upon the outside world. The gas was lighted in hall and parlors, but still they were kept in suspense. Presently Santa Claus appeared in the door-way, and was received with a merry shout.

"Ha, ha! little people!" he called loudly, his

jolly, fat sides shaking with merriment, "who's for a scramble ?

'Come one, come all,
From parlor and hall,
To attend my coronation ;
For I'm to be king !—
'Tis the jolliest thing,
My throne and its decoration.' "

All made a rush, and followed the queer little figure to the library, which was enveloped in Egyptian darkness. As soon as the presence of royalty was felt, a flood of light of divers colors was poured upon the scene, and quick as lightning the fantastic sovereign jumped upon a dais, or throne, where he stood motionless, his eyes emitting flashes of fun.

In addition to the usual grotesque dress in which the annual visitant is arrayed, he wore upon his head a huge crown of gilt, cut in high points, beneath which his long white hair and beard flowed in true Santa Claus style.

"Ha, ha!" laughed he again, rubbing his hands gleefully; "what have we here? Gifts for my subjects, to be distributed in true royal style!" Taking up the card from a huge object by his side, he read, "Miss Nellie Ormsbee."

The outside covering was quickly removed, disclosing a magnificent piano, of exquisite tone and workmanship.

"Now," he continued, "the fair recipient will, no doubt, discourse sweet music from the tips of her

snowy fingers, until the welkin rings. Now, what produceth this prolific tree? By our most royal word, we declare it to be most heavily fruited!"

Taking up a second card, he announced, "Miss Alice Hamilton, from auntie."

The package, being opened, revealed a dainty little gold watch; another parcel contained a dress-pattern, of blue silk, from Mrs. Morrison; from Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbee, a complete set of Dickens's works; and, from Uncle Rufus, a fine copy of Shakespeare.

"Articles which will be useful in the future," said the royal distributor, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "when the busy brain is weaving thoughts for the perusal of less-favored mortals."

Aunt Betsey's gift comprised various elegant little dainties for the toilet, which a refined taste knows so well how to select. Numberless small articles of tasteful design and delicate construction were added, while last, but by far the most highly prized of all, was a large and beautifully bound Bible, whose fly-leaf bore the inscription, in her father's handwriting, "To our darling daughter, Alice."

"CHRISTMAS, 18—

"May this blest volume ever lie
Close to thine heart and near thine eye,
Till life's last hour thy thoughts engage,
And be thy chosen heritage."

Not one was forgotten. The servants were all remembered with those things which were most suitable

for them; and all had a happy consciousness that they were kindly thought of and cared for.

“Allow me, your majesty,” said Mr. Ormsbee, advancing and falling upon one knee, “to present your royal son and heir,” extending, as he spoke, a tiny cradle, made of sugar, studded with nuts, in lieu of diamonds, in which reposed a diminutive china doll, dressed in princely garments, and bearing upon its breast this august title:

“PRINCE ROYAL OF THE HOUSE OF SANTA CLAUS.”

“By our royal honor! but this crowns the whole evening’s work,” he said, taking it in his hand and eyeing it askant. “Whose marvelous handiwork is this? Let her be announced, and we pledge her a kiss from our royal lips.”

There was a general shout of “Mamma?” “Aunt Mary?” and being escorted by her husband, she received the kingly token with becoming grace and dignity.

When Uncle Rufus divested himself of his rather ponderous attire he was in a state of hilarious excitement, which found vent in explosive bursts of laughter, while the perspiration exuded from every pore. Throwing himself back upon a lounge, the gilded gewgaw with which his head was still adorned prevented its repose upon the downy cushion. Tossing it off, he started up, and exclaimed, in tragic tones,

“Lie there, thou tinsel toy! Thy owner has

already learned the truth of the poet's assertion,
'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.'"

"Bequeath it to your heir," said Mr. Ormsbee, laughing.

"Never shall that infant brow be burdened with this kingly crown," was the reply, given in the same tragic manner, and lifting the unoffending circlet upon the toe of his boot, he played foot-ball with it until its glory had departed.





CHAPTER XVIII.

“**W**HAT a jolly man Uncle Rufus is!” exclaimed Nellie the next morning at breakfast. “I never heard any one laugh as heartily as he does.”

“Yes,” said her father, “and it has the genuine ring, too. No counterfeit there.”

“He’s particularly jolly just now,” said Mrs. Ormsbee; “he’s so proud of his wife, and so happy in her possession.”

“Proud of her!” echoed Fan. “I don’t see much to be proud of—at least, as looks go.”

“Looks, Fan!” exclaimed honest Maud. “That’s nothing. I think she’s just as good as she can be. The other day, when I had that terrible headache, she nursed me so nicely that I couldn’t help loving her, she was so kind and gentle.”

“That is right, Maud,” said her uncle, “always stand up for the right. Aunt Betsey is as good as gold.”

“There’s one thing,” said Fannie, “that I can’t understand.”

“Only one thing, Fan?” asked her father, laughing. “Then you are wise, indeed. There are a great many things beyond my comprehension.”

"Well, papa, I mean one thing about Aunt Betsey and Uncle Rufus. I can't understand," she continued, plunging right into the mire in which her curiosity had so often floundered, "why they didn't get married before. What did they wait all these years for?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," replied her father, smiling.

"Fannie," said her mother, "perhaps if you were acquainted with Aunt Betsey's history it might soften, in her case, your impatience with her lack of personal beauty."

"Personal beauty! O, mamma, she is positively ugly! If I didn't love her so much, I believe I should think her hideous."

"Well, daughter, if at her age this body of yours, which is now young and seemly, only contains a soul as pure and lovely as hers, it will be of but small consequence if it be plain or shrunken, or even deformed. Perhaps the jewel is all the more brilliant for the plainness of its setting."

"Papa, you said, 'Thereby hangs a tale,'" said Nellie. "Please unfold it to us, will you?"

"With all my heart," he replied. "Let us adjourn to the library, where we shall not be in the way of the servants, and I will test my powers as historian."

Having disposed themselves in attitudes favorable for both speaker and hearers, Mr. Ormsbee commenced his narrative.

"Aunt Betsey was, as you are already aware, my mother's youngest sister. Being the last of a large family makes her but slightly my senior. When she was but a year old her mother died, and my grandfather shortly married a second time, and was most unfortunate in his choice. Another family of children gathered around him, and as the years rolled on one after another of the first flock married and left the homestead, glad to escape to homes of their own. The three daughters of the second wife also married very early, and the only son established himself in business in Chicago, so that Aunt Betsey was left alone with an irritable, uncompromising step-mother, not by any means a desirable position, as I think even Fan will allow.

"I do not intend to speak against step-mothers in general," continued Mr. Ormsbee, with a mischievous glance at his wife, "some of them are the noblest of womankind, but this was a particularly uninteresting specimen. When Aunt Betsey was about twenty-two she went to Ohio, to visit a school friend, whose brother happened to be at home, spending his college vacation. Happened? Well, I don't believe that, but we'll allow it to pass for the present, and proceed. The old scene was enacted over again—Cupid playing mad pranks with the hearts of young man and maiden, and this time he aimed with such unerring precision, that his darts could never be extracted. The poison with which they were tipped,

rankling in their blood, proved beyond the power of eradication.

“Her visit ended, she returned home with ‘Love’s young dream’ floating in her brain. She did not look twenty-five years ago as she does now, Fan. She was plump and fair then, and as joyous as any bird. People say time has not dealt gently with her. Poor old Father Time! How many sins he is made to bear that ought, rightfully, to be laid upon other shoulders.

“Well, she went home with the dulcet strains of a sweet song lingering in her ear, but ere long they became plaintive, almost dirge-like in their tones, and the rosy cloud that had been golden-tipped became dark as night.

“The correspondence which had been initiated on her return continued unbroken. The young man had written to her father, and obtained from him a conditional consent to their marriage, which amounted to this—that if, after having completed his collegiate course and established himself in his profession, they both maintained their present feelings, no opposition would be offered them. But about two months after Betsey’s return her mother was attacked by a protracted and painful illness, which made her an exacting, fretful invalid for the remainder of her life. The poor girl attended her with all a daughter’s patient affection, but was rewarded only with complaints and reproaches. She endured them all with firm cheer-

fulness, believing that, in God's good time, her probation would be ended. For was not her life ennobled and glorified by love's rosy crown? She was constantly cheered and encouraged by hopeful letters, breathing an unchanging affection, and weaving bright garlands of delighted anticipation for the not far-distant future. She went about her daily tasks, receiving fresh accessions of strength for every day's necessity, the Saviour's words being verified to her, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'

"So the years passed away, sometimes golden-winged, and sometimes leaden-footed, until her lover had been admitted to the bar, and was rapidly rising in his profession, when he claimed his promised bride. Now came the strife between love and duty. The selfish, exacting invalid refused to give her up, declaring she should die if left in other hands, and accusing her of being hard-hearted and unfeeling to think of leaving her in her last illness. To a sensitive conscience such a suggestion would prove a prolific source of bitter self-reproach, and Betsey began to upbraid herself in strong terms for ever having indulged such an anticipation."

"But where were her own daughters?" asked Nellie.

"O they were married, you know, and, immersed in the cares of housekeeping and maternity, paid but little attention to poor Betsey's unhappy thralldom. The importunate lover offered to waive all

his brilliant prospects in his own State and come to Boston, where the invalid could still enjoy her society and occasional ministrations. My grandfather, good, kind old man, tried to reason with her, offering to procure for her the best professional nursing. But she was deaf to all entreaties, wringing her thin hands, and with tears protesting that she wished herself dead and out of the way, and in the next breath vowing vengeance upon the innocent cause of all the trouble.

“Poor Betsey! between reproaches and fault-finding on the one hand, and pleadings on the other, she was worn to a shadow of her former self. The conflict was long and exhaustive, but her strong sense of duty finally triumphed, and the disappointed lover returned alone to his Western home, not soured, or in the least degree acrimonious, but with his great genial heart glowing with a tender appreciation of the noble, self-sacrificing spirit of the woman for whom his love fell little short of idolatry. It never occurred to him that her surrender to the unreasonable demands made upon her was the result of a shallow nature—of a love less firm and abiding in its character than his for her. No, no; he was cast in too noble a mold to harbor suspicion, and he cherished her memory as a greater incentive to a higher and purer life. She had written to him, ‘You had better forget me. I may be a bond-slave here for the rest of my natural life. Marry and make yourself a happy home.’

There is no reason why both of us should be miserable.'

"His answer had been characteristic: 'Never, while life remains, will I marry any woman but you. No, Betsey, you become my wife, or I remain a bachelor to the end of my days.'

"Her father died about two years ago, and she was then, indeed, lonely, for she missed the kind sympathy and loving words of the gentle old man. Her only pleasure, now a half-mournful one, was her Western letters, which never failed. Twice a week the postman's well-known ring brought a short respite from her wearisome task. Even these had to be enjoyed in secret, for if the impatient mother caught a sight of one of these it became the signal for a torrent of invectives against the innocent writer. Betsey often thought that she could detect the goadings of conscience in the midst of this deep-rooted dislike, but said nothing, believing that the leaven would work its way through the entire lump. Still she maintained her post by the sick-bed until last spring, when, with but slight warning, the invalid expired in the arms of her faithful nurse. Now the spring was broken, and Betsey sank into a state of utter unconsciousness, from which it was feared she would never rally. And when consciousness did return, she proved to be prostrated by a nervous disease so severe that only her physician and nurse were allowed to enter her room. That, by the way, Fan, is the cause of

the twitching, which sometimes annoys you ; but I am glad to see that it is passing away. As soon as she became able to sit up and bear any society, a friend in New York, the wife of an eminent physician, who makes such diseases a specialty, invited her to make her a visit, hoping to induce her to submit to a trial of her husband's skill. Uncle Rufus had been in Boston during all her illness, determined at the first opportunity to assume the rights of guardianship. He now accompanied her to New York, and so overjoyed was he at her improvement in a month, that in one of his whims, while they were out walking together, he persuaded her to go to Dr. Parker's house and be married. She offered some slight resistance, pleading the opinion of their friends as an excuse, but at last, feeling that his rare constancy and devotion deserved its reward, she consented. The rest you know. Now do you wonder that Uncle Rufus is a happy man ? ”

There was thoughtful silence for a moment, which Nellie broke by exclaiming,

“ Dear Aunt Betsey, it seems to me that she was as much a martyr as some who have suffered at the stake for conscience' sake, for she suffered slow torture for the same reason.”

“ You are right, Nellie,” said her mother, softly ; but a little longer, and I feel sure that she would have died in the harness. Who will say that she will not wear a martyr's crown ? ”

"I have always loved her," replied Nellie; "but this knowledge makes me reverence her as something almost sacred."

"She is worthy of your reverence, my daughter," said her father, "and of your truest affection, for she has been purified as by fire."

The next day the air was full of snow. Heavy, battling clouds hung on the face of the sky, or were driven before the wind with threatening velocity. By noon they settled down into an impenetrable veil, and an hour later a fleecy mantle covered the ground. Steadily the feathery crystals descended, and soon every slender twig bent beneath its snowy weight. All night it snowed, and in the morning every thing was bright and glistening in the clear sunlight. The merry jingle of sleigh-bells was welcome music, and the shouts of the boys at their snow-balling rung out on the crisp, frosty air, with a rousing peal.

"O, papa!" exclaimed Nellie, as she greeted her father with her usual morning kiss, "can't we have a sleigh-ride to-day?"

"I don't know," he answered, "the coachman reported one of the horses lame last night. I can't tell in what condition I may find him. However, I should be sorry to deprive you all of a pleasure which can only occasionally be enjoyed. I will come home to luncheon, and if he is not fit to be driven, I will hire a team, and we'll all pile in and have a jolly ride."

"O, wont that be fun?" cried Maud, clapping her hands; "I love a sleigh-ride."

"You love any thing that promises pleasure, I rather think," said her uncle, pinching her rosy cheek; "you are a genuine pleasure hunter. I give you credit for one thing, though, you are easily pleased, so you usually don't have to hunt very far."

"Yes," said Mrs. Ormsbee, "she is like the bee; she gathers honey from every flower. I sincerely hope there is much pleasure in store for you, dear, in both this world and the next."

"Aunt Mary, you are just like mamma," answered Maud; "you always think of every thing in reference to the next world. I don't believe either of you live in this world at all, and yet you are both so happy."

"Why should we be otherwise, when we enjoy all the best pleasure to be had here, and a promise of something better, infinitely better, by and by?"

About eleven o'clock, as the girls were seated in the pleasant library, Nellie with her drawing, Maud and Fannie playing some game, and Alice with a book upon her lap, they were interrupted by a merry shout. For some reason Alice could not read this morning. She had been weaving one of those bright webs of fancy in which she loved to indulge, being more than usually preoccupied, when the door opened, and Uncle Rufus revealed himself as the

author of the "hallo!" whose echoes seemed even now ringing on the air.

"Hallo!" he replied, "where's your mother, Pet?" walking up to Nellie, and laying one hand upon her head. "I want to rob her of her ducklings."

"I don't know, Uncle Rufus. She was here a moment ago, and I hardly knew she had vanished."

"Why, Uncle Rufus, you here?" exclaimed the truant, entering, "hasn't this been a jolly snow-storm?"

"Jolly! Yes, indeed. See here, Mary," he said, turning around and facing her, "I want these youngsters to go home with me for a few days. Betsey sent me," he added, pretending, like a great overgrown school-boy, to be afraid of a refusal. "I wouldn't have dared to come, only I know you wouldn't deny her any thing. Come, girls, scamper away and get on your dry goods. Now, Mary, you haven't a word to say, because its Betsey's doings, you know. We're two old fogies, and she wants to hear fresh, young voices singing through the house, and nimble feet, and to be mixed up generally. I don't care any thing about it."

"O, no, not you!" she replied. "But what will Fred say? He promised us all a sleigh-ride this afternoon."

"O, bless your heart, I stopped at Fred's office, and made it all right with him, if Mary said so. He'd agree to jump down Niagara, if Mary only said

so. Bless your dear heart, you and he can go off skylarking together. Imagine yourselves twenty-five years younger, and enjoying the halcyon days of courtship. Don't I know all about it?"

"You ought to," she answered, laughing. "You were long enough about it."

"Yes," was the reply, in a strangely serious tone, "and I wouldn't go back twenty-five years and have my Betsey suffer such torture again for the sake of having her rejuvenated and beautified, although she isn't as young and fair as she once was. To me she's as sweet as any rose, because her spirit is so lovely. Come on," he said, gayly, as the girls came trooping down stairs, all equipped for their drive. "Bundle yourselves into the sleigh, and look out you don't freeze to death. Mind, I sha'n't stop my beauties, if the whole pack of you cry for mercy."

Uncle Rufus's cream-colored beauties, as he called them—and they well deserved the name—were soon skimming over the smooth snow, with their dainty heads erect, and with true aristocratic bearing, their hoofs scarcely touching the ground in their prancing motion. At last they dashed up to the door.

"Here we are!" exclaimed their owner, springing to the ground. "Jump out, you baggages;" and, tossing the reins to the coachman, he dashed up the steps just in time to meet Aunt Betsey, her face wreathed in smiles, coming to the door to meet them.

"Here," he cried, "I've brought you all these nuisances. Don't see what you want of 'em. 'Spose they'll turn the house out the windows and ruin every thing with their mad pranks. Bah! any thing but a lot of school-girls;" and turning off, whistling a merry tune, he was soon out of sight.

"Don't mind him, dear," said Aunt Betsey, turning to Alice, who, as the stranger of the party, she feared might be mystified or wounded by his random talk. "He's the kindest-hearted man in the world," she continued, as the others gathered around her, constituting her audience. "He found a strange cat out by the gate the other day, that seemed to be sick, so he brought it in and nursed and fussed over it till the poor thing actually died in his arms. But come, girls, get off your things. Luncheon is waiting;" and she tripped away on hospitable thoughts intent.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Uncle Rufus, appearing at this moment; "where's Betsey?"

"Gone!" answered Fan's saucy voice. "Gone to hide herself in disgust at your inhospitable introduction of visitors into your own house."

"Get out of the way, you saucy minx, or I'll—I'll stop your mouth with kisses. I know what has become of the mistress of the mansion; she's gone to see that there's provender enough to satisfy your capacious appetite. She knows your failing in that respect, and is determined to satisfy you, if possible. I haven't a doubt you'll ruin us."

"Now, Rufus," cried Aunt Betsey, stepping in just in time to hear the last remark, "you're too bad! Don't mind him, Fan, he shall be chastised in true school-boy fashion."

"Uncle Rufus," asked Nellie, after luncheon, "will you show us your cabinet of curiosities?"

"Yes," he replied, "if Fan will keep her meddlesome fingers off."

"Now, you dear old humbug!" exclaimed that young lady, springing up, and throwing her arms around his neck, "you know that's just what you want me to do. You want me to say, 'What's this!' 'O, what's that!' just so that you may have the pleasure of describing them, and displaying your knowledge. Isn't that true, Aunt Betsey?"

"Pretty near true, dear," she answered; "he likes to have you interested in his collection."

"I thought so," replied Fan, as she caught his unresisting hand, and led him in triumph to the library, closely followed by the others.

"I know what that is," she cried, pointing to a piece of ivory which bore a close resemblance to a huge tooth; "it's a whale's tooth."

"No, it isn't," he answered, quickly. "It's the jaw-bone of Balaam's ass."

A merry shout followed this announcement, which he received with an assumption of dignified silence.

"This," he said, gravely, taking a small piece of paper from the cabinet, "is something you have never

seen. I value it so highly that I only exhibit it on state occasions like the present. It is a great and very valuable curiosity—a lock of hair cut from the head of Demosthenes after death, and sent to me by express.”

They all gathered around him as he unwound a coil of long, light hair of a tawny hue, and passed it caressingly through his fingers.

“O, Uncle Rufus!” exclaimed Maud, “how long it is, and what a queer color! Who ever saw a man with such hair!”

“Yes,” he said, gravely, “it is a queer color, but you must remember that Demosthenes lived in queer times, and passed through queer scenes, and they may have had some influence upon the length and color of his hair. I prize this very highly. Demosthenes was an old friend of mine.”

Nellie and Alice exchanged glances, but, seeing the joke, they remained silent, wishing to hear Uncle Rufus develop it in his own fashion. As for Maud and Fan, they were too wild with excitement and curiosity to think whether Demosthenes was an Athenian orator or an American statesman.

“Yes,” he continued, still without smiling; “Demosthenes was the best friend I ever had, except Betsey. I’ve ridden on his back many hundred miles, and always found him true and faithful, until at last he died, poor fellow!”

“O, Uncle Rufus!” cried Fan, “it was your horse!”

"Of course it was ; what did you suppose it was?"

"Why, I thought it was a man," she answered, with a pretended pout. "What a cheat you are!"

"What did you call him Demosthenes for?" asked Nellie.

"Because he was so eloquent."

"Eloquent!" echoed Fan; "who ever heard of a horse being eloquent!"

"Let me tell you, Miss Fan, that there is more eloquence in the glance of an intelligent eye than is often conveyed in a torrent of words. If you had looked into Demosthenes's and read the mute affection in their soft depths, you would have said he was a first-class orator and worthy of his name."

"What's that?" asked Fan, pointing to an uninviting-looking substance of ungainly form and a brownish color.

"A fossil," he answered; "what you'll be one of these days, if you don't take care of yourself."

"No, she wont, Uncle Rufus," replied Nellie. "She can't keep still long enough."

"That's true, Nell; perpetual motion and petrification are not cause and effect, are they?"

Heigh-ho! School life again. Well, "all pleasures must have an end," is an aphorism, the truth of which has been well proven in all climes and through all ages. But, ah! here comes the balmy, dewy-eyed Spring. Let us see what she brings in her train.

Tulips, crocuses, and daffodils are lifting their bright heads in the court-yards and gardens of the city, while far away, in the still bare and naked woods, the moss is green and fresh under its snowy coverlet, and the trailing arbutus peeps timidly out, sending forth each fragrant, delicate little tendril, as though asking permission to come into the light and cheer of day. Yes, Spring is here, making one involuntary burst out into those charming joyous words of England's sweet poetess :

"I come, I come, ye have called me long ;
I come o'er the mountains with light and song ;
Ye may trace my steps o'er the wakening earth,
By the winds which tell of the violet's birth,
By the primrose stars in the shadowy grass,
By the green leaves opening as I pass."

Easter flowers are being coaxed or forced into bloom ; and the dainty azalia, the stately lily, tea-roses, with their creamy, delicately-folded leaves, and their not less fragrant and lovely, but more diminutive sisterhood are putting on their beautiful array, breathing out their aroma as a sweet and acceptable accompaniment to the triumphant anthem, "Christ, the Lord, is risen to-day."

Mabel's marriage had become a fixed fact, and as her ambitious little sister was unwilling to lose any time from her studies, the wedding was arranged to take place during Easter week, when Alice would be enjoying her spring vacation, toward which she now began to look with almost uncontrollable longing.

Homesickness had laid its heavy weight upon her many, many times, but she had steadily fought it, and, as all brave and patient spirits will, had come off victor. Now, however, as the time approached, she found self-control a more difficult matter, and her heart burdened with delighted anticipation. But with it an important query presented itself, How should she be transported thither? Mr. Ormsbee was gathering testimony in an important law case and could not leave the city. No one seemed available as escort. What should she do?

"I can go alone," she said one morning in a debate as to ways and means of journeying. "If Mr. Ormsbee will go with me to the depot and put me in the care of the conductor, Mabel and Mr. Chandler will meet me in New York."

"Not a bad idea, Snow-drop," said Mr. Ormsbee. "I'm sorry I can't be with you, but in lieu of me you can accept the next best man, and that, under the circumstances, seems to be the conductor."

"But is it practicable? Is it safe?" asked his wife.

"Eminently practicable," he replied, "and I can see no good reason for considering it unsafe."

Alice's "I must go" was conclusive, and as her suggestion seemed the most feasible, Mr. Ormsbee placed her under the charge of the gentlemanly conductor, who promised his most careful attention until his charge should be delivered into the care of her friends.

Alice had scarcely become comfortably seated and the train under way before she was made aware that she was an object of interest or curiosity to some persons occupying a seat a little in her rear on the other side of the car. Presently she heard her name mentioned, and slightly turning her head, recognized Mrs. Wentworth and Lou.

"There, Lou!" said the former, "isn't that Alice Hamilton?"

"Yes," answered Lou, impatiently; "I wish she was somewhere else. She's always crossing my path. I wouldn't have had her see me at Aunt Polly's for any thing, and now, of course, she's heard of all our troubles, and she'll be glad, too, I know."

Lou was not always particular about her tenses, and now her excitement carried her so far that she scarcely knew or cared whether her language expressed her exact meaning or not.

"Let's go over and talk to her, so that if she's heard any thing we'll get her off the track, and she won't believe it."

Without waiting for either concurrence or remonstrance from her amiable daughter, Mrs. Wentworth took possession of the seat in front of Alice, which happened to be vacant, and nodding familiarly, with a patronizing smile she asked,

"Isn't your name Alice Hamilton?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Alice, wondering what was coming next.

"Been to school in Boston, haven't you?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the second laconic reply.

"You've been staying with Maud Morrison's aunt, haven't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I spose they live in great snuff, don't they?"

"Mr. Ormsbee's place is very handsome, and they live beautifully," answered Alice, somewhat aroused by her inquisitor's insinuating manner.

"Well, I've heard it said that his wife is an awful extravagant piece, and a Tartar to boot; and I know the Morrisons are as proud as Lucifer."

"Whoever gave you that information," replied Alice, with quiet dignity, "was entirely unacquainted with Mrs. Ormsbee's character. She is a lovely, Christian lady, and I have never seen the slightest evidence of pride in the Morrisons. They are kind and good to every body."

"How do you like Boston?"

"Very much."

"What school are you attending there?"

"Professor Nugent's."

"O yes; that's where I intend to send Lou, if we move to Boston, as we expect to do. I have been there now, looking at an elegant house that my husband thinks of buying. We are getting tired of living in New York, there is so much shoddy there, and we think the society in Boston is superior. We want Lou to have every advantage, and mean she

shall be an accomplished lady. Of course, she will go in the best society, as we have never mingled in any other. The arrangements for the house are nearly all made. My husband is only waiting for me to say the word, and, of course, I shall say it as soon as I get home, so I suppose we shall move very soon. You are going back to school, aint you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good-bye, then. You may expect to see Lou there after the summer vacation."

Alice bowed her head, without a reply, glad to be rid of her unwelcome visitor.

"There!" exclaimed the lady, reseating herself by her daughter's side. "I've given her a quietus, I'll warrant you. I've made her believe that we're going to buy an elegant house in Boston, and that she's going to be blessed with your society at school."

"Humph! I hope not. I don't want to go to school where she is."

"I don't know about that. Now that rich aunty's got her in tow, it might be a good thing for you to cultivate her acquaintance, and if I can put those absurd notions of honesty out of your father's head, and make him save enough to live handsomely, you might do it yet."

"You can't do that," answered Lou, sullenly. "He's bound to make us beggars. He's as stubborn as the stubbornest mule that ever drew breath."

"You and I, together, can make such a din

around his ears, that, for peace' sake, he'll be glad to do as we want him to."

"Don't you believe it," was the inelegant reply, "He'll do what he thinks is right if you and I both stand, like tigers, in his way."

Alice found the simple preparations for Mabel's wedding all completed, and on Wednesday of Easter week the ceremony was performed, only the inner circle of friends being present.

"Miss Alice," said Dr. Parker, after the twain had been made one, "I flatter myself it will not be many years before I shall be called upon to do a similar service for you."

"I think not, sir," she answered, laughing; "I shall never find any body silly enough to want to marry me."

"Not she," chimed in Dr. Monroe. "Men are afraid of blue glasses and spiral curls, to say nothing of ink-stained fingers."

"But, I apprehend no probability of ever seeing Miss Alice in that plight."

"She meditates it, though, I assure you. She always had her head above Mont Blanc, and from her sublime height looked down with infinite indifference upon those very individuals of whose wholesome fear I have just spoken."

"Why not allow her flights a still higher range, and set her on Parnassus at once. It strikes me, doctor, that you are a little at fault in your antici-

pations. If I am not mistaken the inhabitants of those exalted regions do not convey their thoughts in a fluid so gross and so mundane in its quality as ink. They possess a subtle power by which their ideas are transfused into the brains of their fellows, without the slow medium by which we mortals communicate with one another. Besides, I imagine they have no use for blue glasses, and spiral curls are, probably, not in the category of their ornaments."

"There, doctor," laughed Alice, "you are caught in your own net."

"Not caught so fast as you think for. I will leave it to Doctor Parker if your ideas are not very lofty, when even *I* do not suit them. The idea of calling *me* a big blushing peony! And then," he continued, turning toward the smiling clergyman, "after the severe ordeal to which I have submitted myself, I am still not sufficiently ethereal to please her ultra refined taste."

"And I leave it to Dr. Parker if my simile is not a correct one," she answered, with an arch glance.

"Particularly appropriate, I should say," replied the latter. "Ah, doctor, you are getting the worst of it. You had better beat a retreat."

"Saucebox!" he exclaimed, shaking his finger at her playfully. "You are developing a taste for repartee, with all your other accomplishments. I shall take care that that germ doesn't sprout. I claim the monopoly there."

There was a sudden rustle in the room at this moment, caused by the re-appearance of the bride to take her farewell previous to her departure. After having taken leave of the others she approached her father, who lay back in his easy-chair in an attitude of utter exhaustion, his head gently reclining on one side. His newly married daughter knelt by his side to receive his parting blessing. Drawing her gently toward him, he said, in feeble tones, as he placed his trembling hand upon her head,

“My darling daughter, your father’s God—”

He ceased. A solemn silence prevailed for a moment, when Dr. Monroe stepped forward and, reverently removing the cold hand, led Mabel to the nearest seat. Two guests had met there that day. The one was greeted with happy smiles and merry jest—the other unbidden—unknown—unwelcomed.



CHAPTER XX.

MR. MORRISON, having had Tony under his tuition for two years, had found him by no means so unpromising a pupil as first appearances indicated. Having succeeded, after a time, in brushing away the cobwebs, and sweeping out the dusty corners of his brain, he began to see some rays of light through the crannies and broken clapboards which walled in that wonderful structure.

The boy had mastered the elements of reading with tolerable facility. He had acquired some knowledge of the science of arithmetic, and had learned the shape of the earth, its diurnal and annual revolutions, together with the location of various places on its surface. His judicious instructor had employed oral teaching to a very great extent, and in casual conversations had related to him incidents which occurred in the lives of some of the heroes of ancient Greece and Rome. He had explained to him the theory of American republicanism, and had rendered him, in some degree, familiar with the names of our most popular and efficient presidents.

Tony had now reached the age of fourteen, and Mr. Ormsbee began to think it time to fulfill his

promise. He accordingly transported him to Boston, and placed him in a classical school, where he made rapid progress, manifesting an aptitude and fondness for learning which once seemed entirely foreign to his nature.

Mr. Ormsbee, besides reading Latin with Nellie and Alice in the evening at home, followed out the line of his brother-in-law's idea in reference to Tony, managing to convey to him, in the form of ordinary conversation, many valuable bits of information.

The constant attrition produced by association with boys of his own age, who had enjoyed superior advantages, gradually wore off the rough edges of an unprepossessing exterior, and with the additional self-respect which the acquisition of knowledge always gives, he took a pride in his personal appearance, which placed him almost beyond the power of recognition.

"Tony," said Mr. Horton, on one occasion, "you have now had six months' experience in digging for Latin roots; which is the easier work, that, or hoeing potatoes?"

"Well, sir," he answered, smiling, "I suppose, if I speak truth, I shall be compelled to say, hoeing potatoes, because I believe I managed to perform very little labor in that direction. If you ask me which I like the better of the two, I should say the Latin roots, by all means, although I know it is necessary that some one should hoe potatoes; and if it had not been for

the kindness of friends I should probably be doing that very thing at this moment."

"I hope you recognize the dealings of Providence in the matter, my dear boy," said Mr. Ormsbee. "You would never have obtained an education through the legitimate channel, not only on account of pecuniary inability, but because your father considers it of but little benefit, mainly, I presume, for the reason that he is not placed in a position where its advantages are brought within the sphere of his observation."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, with a look and gesture of determined courage; "but I mean to try to convince him of his mistake. If I live, I hope to show him that education can accomplish that which ignorance has no power to perform."

"That's it, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Horton. "That speech shows that you have in you 'the stuff of which *men* are made.' Keep to that resolution, and you will make a man, some of these days, of whom your friends need not be ashamed."

"Thank you, sir. I should be most ungrateful to those kind friends who first aroused my ambition if I did not improve the advantages which they have placed within my reach," he answered, gathering an armful of books with which he proceeded to his own room to master whatever difficulties might arise therefrom.

A few days after this conversation, it being Sat-

urday, Alice was seated at the library-table busily writing, when the door opened, and Aunt Betsey appeared.

“Good-morning,” she said, cheerily. “All alone?” at the same time unceremoniously divesting herself of hat and mantle and laying them on a chair.

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Alice. “Mrs. Ormsbee and Nellie have gone to see a poor family, and Fan and Maud are out for a walk.”

“Why didn’t you go with them, little bookworm? Do you prefer remaining here with all these silent friends around you?”

“Yes, ma’am,” she answered. “It is so quiet and pleasant here; and then I thought it would be a good time to write while they were all gone.”

“That means that you were having a good time, until the old auntie came and interrupted you,” was the smiling rejoinder.

“O, no!” she answered, earnestly, the truth of which was confirmed by the sparkling eye and the bright smile now wreathing the sweet lips. “I am always glad to see you, Aunt Betsey. Besides, I have finished my paper, and you are not hindering me the least bit.”

“I am glad I am not. Now as we are all alone here, suppose you let me see what so closely occupied your attention that you could forego the pleasure of a walk this lovely morning, with such lively companions as Maud and Fan?”

"O, auntie dear, it is nothing but a composition for school. You know we are required to prepare one every two weeks."

"Never mind, let me see it, dear," was the reply, given in persuasive tones; and, having adjusted her glasses, she drew the paper gently from Alice's reluctant hand, and, seating herself by the window, read it to the end.

"Do you often write in poetry?" she asked, when she had finished.

"Yes, ma'am, quite often."

"Will you give me this?"

"O, Aunt Betsey! what can you possibly want to do with my poor little poem? It can't be of any use to you."

"I may not be a very competent judge, but it strikes me that this is worthy of publication."

"O, Aunt Betsey!" she again exclaimed, this time very joyfully. The old lady's kind interest at once gaining her confidence, she continued, "Do you know that is the dream of my life? It is what I am studying and hoping for, to be able, some day, to write something that will be worth reading."

"Rufus has an intimate friend who is editor of some magazine in Boston, and if you will let me take this, I will ask him to try to get it published for you."

"Thank you!" she cried, eagerly, "you may have it; but I have never before allowed any one to see

my pieces but my teacher—except, of course, mamma, when I was at home.”

Hearing the merry voices of Fan and Maud as they opened the street door, Aunt Betsey quickly concealed the paper, of whose existence the two who now entered were in utter ignorance.

“Aunt Betsey!” exclaimed Fan, rushing up to her and giving her a warm embrace, “of all people in the world, I’m glad to see *you*.”

“It is very good of you to say so,” she answered, laughingly; “but I warn you that you may have cause to take that back before night. I’m going to stay all day, and Rufus is coming to dinner; so you’ll have enough of the Horton family for once.”

“O, that’s glorious!” exclaimed Maud, dancing around the room. Uncle Rufus always makes so much fun, and he hasn’t been here to dinner in an age.”

“It strikes me, Miss Maud, that your memory is slightly at fault, for he was here, in my company, not two weeks ago.”

“Well, it seems like an age to me, because he’s so jolly.”

“She means the age of one of her paper dolls!” exclaimed Fan, in a teasing tone. “You know they don’t live to be Methuselahs, Aunt Betsey.”

“Here,” said Aunt Betsey, taking from her pocket four little packages, “see if these will tame your ecstasies, and enable you to exist until he arrives.

There's one for each of you, and here's another for Nellie. I need not neglect her, if she is a little girl no longer."

Each neatly folded paper was soon opened, disclosing a web-like handkerchief of finest linen cambric, deftly and daintily embroidered by the hand of the donor. A monogram, encircled by a delicate spray of tiny flowers and leaves, with the graceful, curling tendrils of the grape-vine, appeared on each.

A simultaneous exclamation, "O, how lovely!" burst from the trio.

"You dear, generous Aunt Betsey! you are always —"

Maud's enthusiasm was cut short by the entrance of Tony, who came in quest of Mrs. Ormsbee. His appeal to Fannie was answered with her characteristic propensity for inquiry,

"She's gone out. What do you want of her?"

"Mr. Ormsbee sent me up from the office to say that he will bring a guest home with him to dinner."

"Who is it?" she asked, abruptly.

"I don't know, Miss Fannie; Mr. Ormsbee did not tell me."

Mrs. Ormsbee and Nellie returned full of the merits and miseries of the family they had been visiting, and at once proceeded to form plans for their relief, assisted by Aunt Betsey's ever ready sympathy and prompt action.

"O, mamma!" exclaimed Fan, rushing breathlessly into the room, "papa sent Tony home to say that he is going to bring company to dinner. Can you guess who it is?"

"No, Fan, I have not the most remote idea, and have very little curiosity about the matter. Some of your father's friends, of course; we shall know whom all in good time."

"About four o'clock Uncle Rufus entered, accompanied by Tony.

"Nell!" shouted the former; "where's Nell? Come," he said, with a merry wink at her mother, "I want you to go with me."

"Where?" she asked.

"Never mind where. Just come along."

Nellie hastened up stairs to put on her street gear, and in an incredibly short space of time the stealthy closing of the street door announced their departure in a most mysterious manner.

"Some of Rufus's pranks," commented his admiring wife, and there the matter dropped, only to be renewed, however, by the inquisitive Fan, when, after a two-hours' absence, they returned, immovable to all her importunities. Questions and conjectures were alike unavailing.

"Now, Fan," said Uncle Rufus, "you may just as well hold that saucy tongue of yours, for no amount of pleading will induce me to unfold the 'book of fate' which I hold in my hands."

"I'll ask Tony," she said, with a defiant nod of her pretty little head.

"Do," he replied, in a mocking tone. "Tony has sworn allegiance to our cause. You couldn't bribe him to tell you. Fire and sword wouldn't make him reveal it."

"I don't care; I can wait," she answered, as she executed a pirouette, and danced out of the room.

When the carriage returned with Mr. Ormsbee the deepening October twilight revealed the manly form and noble features of Dr. Parker. Uncle Rufus threw open the door, and, advancing to the carriage, cordially grasped the hand of the new-comer.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormsbee, "Dr. Parker! You are most welcome! Fred sent me word that he would bring a guest home with him, but left it to my very fertile imagination to guess whom. As such occasions are by no means rare, I have not taxed myself very severely to decide the question; but, I assure you, the discovery gives me infinite pleasure."

"Thank you; I am happy to see you all again. Being in Boston for a day or two, I could not think of returning without seeing my young friend, and acting as mouth-piece between her and her friends in my own city. I hope you are in your usual health, sir?" he added, turning to Uncle Rufus.

"I am very well, sir; always well. I have an inheritance of unbroken health, without a flaw in its title deed."

"Then, I trust, you appreciate your heritage, and are duly sensible of its value. Ah, daughter, how are you?"

"Very well, sir," replied Alice, advancing toward minister, and accepting his proffered hand; "but the please tell me, is mamma well, and all the rest at home?"

"Very well, indeed. I called there before I left the city, to glean all the items which might be interesting to you, and, I assure you, all is favorable. I also met Mrs. Chandler, on my way to the depot, looking as rosy and happy as possible."

"Come, doctor," said Mr. Ormsbee, entering, "let's go up stairs and perform our ablutions before dinner."

"Thank you; I am rather dusty and travel-soiled, and feel as though a dip of face and hands in cold water would be acceptable, besides rendering me more presentable to the ladies."

"Mrs. Ormsbee," said her guest at dinner, "you have gathered quite a bevy of young ladies around you. They have advanced considerably since I saw them."

"Yes," she replied, with a matronly air; "I begin to feel the accumulated weight of years upon my brow."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Nellie, "what an absurdity! 'The accumulated weight of years' upon that smooth brow of yours! No one will ever think of calling

my little mamma old, with her luxuriant hair and fine teeth."

"More than can be said for her daughter," chuckled Uncle Rufus. "Ah, Nell, you needn't flatter yourself that you bear any resemblance to your youthful mother. You will look like a grandma before she reaches the dignity of one. Fan here is the beauty of the family, and her beauty is akin to that of the illustrious quadruped to whom is ascribed the honor of our progenitorship."

"Now, Uncle Rufus," retorted that young lady, "if I were good at repartee, I should say that there was much more similarity between yourself and that one whose wardrobe is so extensive that he is obliged to carry his trunk wherever he goes."

"Perhaps, Miss Fannie," interposed Dr. Parker, "Mr. Horton is of that class who hold in veneration the aforesaid progenitor, in which case his comparison was certainly a compliment of the highest order."

"I don't know," she replied; "but one thing I do know, he's a dear old humbug. He doesn't mean half he says."

"Uncle Rufus and Fan," said Mr. Ormsbee, "always wage a war of words when they meet. They make me think of two clouds heavily charged with electricity; as soon as they approach each other there is always a report."

"Good, Fred!" exclaimed Aunt Betsey. "Rufus is always in a positive state of electricity when he

meets Fan, and that happens which may always be expected under such circumstances—a concussion.”

“Well, well, Fan,” rejoined Uncle Rufus, in a conciliatory tone, “if you and I emulate the lightning’s flash and the thunder’s roar, it may be that we produce the same effect upon the moral atmosphere that those elements do upon the physical. At all events, the sun always shines afterward.”

“Yes,” she answered, “and brightly, too.”

Amid the clatter of merry tongues which filled the parlors an hour later, Dr. Parker seated himself by Alice for a few moments of quiet conversation.

“Miss Alice,” he commenced, in his peculiarly kind, sympathetic tones, “perhaps you recollect volunteering to me some speculations as to what you would find in the future which stretched before you. May I ask if your experience thus far has been pleasant or otherwise?”

“O, pleasant!” was her eager reply, “most pleasant; very much more so than I thought. Every one is so kind to me, Dr. Parker, that I cannot think it otherwise. Do you know I often think of what David says: ‘The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.’ It is David who says so, is it not, sir?”

“Yes, and I am rejoiced to find, my dear girl, that your thoughts turn so involuntarily to the word of God.”

“Yes,” she answered, quickly, “but I don’t think any credit belongs to me for that, because it is due to

my early instruction. I was taught the Bible as soon as I could speak, and am much, very much more familiar with that than with any other book."

"You will find none in the whole range of literature so worthy your constant reading and study—none so replete with fitting and appropriate similes, with sublime thoughts and beautiful imagery. If you make that the man of your counsel and the guide of your youth, you will never go far from the strait and narrow way. It contains a solution of every doubt, a balm for every wound."

"Do you think," she asked, looking earnestly into his face, "that mamma grieves very bitterly for papa's death?"

"Not bitterly, Alice, but sincerely. Bitter grief must necessarily contain an element of rebellion, and there is nothing of that nature in her unfeigned mourning. Your mother is a Christian. There is the kernel of the nut—fair, smooth, and unmarred, and the heavy blow which removed the outer covering has but revealed its inner sweetness. She grieves, indeed, but not as those without hope. To your father death was but the hand which drew aside the veil, and disclosed the glories of the before invisible world; and she is waiting for the same kind hand to perform a similar office for her."

"I hope—"

Alice's wish, whatever it might have been, was never expressed, for at this moment a merry shout

was heard, simultaneously with which a perfect shower of mottoes and loose sugar-plums came raining down upon the astonished group, followed by tiny bouquets so dexterously hurled that each one found an appropriate lodgement.

“O!” exclaimed Fan, clapping her hands, “Confetti! confetti! a Roman carnival!”

Amid peals of laughter and dodging of heads the pelting continued, until the stock of ammunition and the breath of the performers were alike exhausted.

“Now,” said Mr. Ormsbee, after the dodging and scrambling, the laughing and shouting had in some measure subsided, “I suppose it is in order to dive into the hearts of these dainty little conceits, and see what their fancy papers and delicate ribbons conceal. Probably a sugar-plum, and something sweeter still in praise of an arched eyebrow, or a dewy lip, or some such nonsense.”

“You never wrote such nonsense, did you, Uncle Fred?” asked Maud, with a merry glance at her aunt.

“Not I. No such silly stuff ever emanated from this profound brain. Ask Aunt Mary.”

“Aunt Mary declines to be interviewed upon that subject, lest her truthful tongue do mischief,” was the laughing rejoinder.

“Here, Fan!” shouted Uncle Rufus, “here’s one that just suits you,” and he proceeded to read aloud,

“Saucy, unguarded, and beautiful fay,
Laugh in the sunshine while yet it is May.”

"Well," she replied, lightly, "I mean to laugh while I can. There is no harm in that, is there, Dr. Parker?"

"Not the slightest, so long as your mirth is innocent in its character. Laughter is wholesome in its effects, especially so because it is infinitely more becoming than tears. A pretty mouth wreathed in smiles is a very pleasant sight, Miss Fannie. Alice, how will this do? Shall I follow Mr. Horton's example?" and without waiting for a reply, he read,

"Minerva o'er her stately temple still presides,
And to a favored few her ancient lore confides."

"That isn't true," said practical Maud. "Minerva's temple is in ruins."

"Give wings to your imagination, Maud," said Nell, "and fancy a goddess presiding over the whole realm of learning, and you have the idea."

"I am not possessed of any imagination, Nell; I never can fancy any thing. Every thing is real to me."

"So real," said Uncle Rufus, "that if an angel were to present himself before her, she would immediately subject him to a test of her mortal hands to ascertain if he were spirit or substantial flesh and blood, with veins, muscles, and sinews similar to her own."

"Now!" exclaimed Fan. "Just in time! I think this must have been written for you, Uncle Rufus,

"'Who sets that witty tongue in motion,
Had better be submerged in ocean.'"

"Ah, Fan! it is well that our tilts are only those of the tongue. If they were conducted with any sharper weapon, somebody would assuredly be injured."

"He forgets," said Alice, in a low tone to Dr. Parker, "that the Bible says, 'The tongue is a sharp sword.'"

"It has been suggested to me, Mr. Horton," said that gentleman, "that in an ancient book, written many hundred years ago—a book, by the way, of which your library may boast a copy—you will find something in relation to the tongue, which compares it to a sharp sword."

"Yes, sir; and in consideration of the antiquity and veracity of that ancient book, I grant that the aforesaid member may prove a dangerous weapon—of course, in the possession of less skillful skirmishers than Fan and myself."

"It would be presumption in us, sir, to dispute that you are both unique in wielding the weapon whose skillful use has been by acclamation conceded to the sex of your fair combatant."

"Now," said Alice, with a vivid blush, "I am sure you are entitled to this," handing him a slip of paper, on which he read the following:

"When clerical wit and good humor we find,
With wisdom and knowledge and goodness combined,
The union a genus most noble hath planned,
With courage and virtue and honesty manned."

"Thank you," he answered. "Rather flattering, and I am afraid—"

"Here! here!" interrupted Uncle Rufus, "what does all this by-play mean? No contraband goods allowed here. Every thing is to be public—not done in a corner," and seizing the offending paper from the hand of the laughing clergymen, he proceeded to read it in most emphatic tones.

"Miss Alice," whispered Tony, stepping shyly to her side, "this certainly means you—"

"'Sly, gentle puss, your blushes spare,
They should not tinge a cheek so fair.'"

"Your comparison to a Roman carnival, Miss Fannie, was apt, except in one particular," said Dr. Parker, during a lull of the noisy mirth, "and that quite an important one. We have had here the flowers and the sugar plums, but happily we lacked the third element, the confetti, which, being composed of bits of lime, about the size of a pea, are decidedly dangerous to the faces and eyes of the crowd among whom they are thrown. Our pleasure has been unmarred by any discordant element, and therefore our enjoyment has been real."

"Were you ever in Rome?" asked Fannie.

"Yes, I was there once, during all the carnival festivities, and an animated scene it was, I assure you. I occupied a position in a balcony on the Corso, where it is to be seen in its full glory. I had a fine view

of all the proceedings without being obliged to participate in them."

"How long does it last?" inquired Alice.

"It extends through the eleven days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday, which, you know, is the commencement of Lent, although but eight days are actually given up to gayety, the two Sabbaths and Friday being strictly Church days."

"Of what do these gayeties consist?" asked Nellie.

"I have read accounts of these things, but a living description of a person who has been an eye-witness would be delightful."

"They consist of almost every thing which at all partakes of the nature of fun. Pelting and showering of bon-bons, bouquets, and the famous confetti, which are either thrown by the hand, or skillfully ejaculated through a tube. The houses are decorated with long streamers of every color; the Corso, which is a narrow street about a mile long, is hedged in by a double row of carriages going in contrary directions filled with gayly dressed ladies and gentlemen, and every thing wears a general air of festivity. All manner of practical jokes are carried out, and fun, hilarity, and sometimes villainy are the order of the day."

Summons to the dining-room interrupted Dr. Parker's description. Repairing thither, they found the table surmounted by a pyramid of ice-cream, flanked by cake, fruits, etc., in the most tempting array.

"What does this mean?" asked Mrs. Ormsbee, as she surveyed her own table, spread without her orders. "Fred Ormsbee, how dare you do this without my knowledge and consent?"

"I am utterly ignorant of the affair," he replied, in pretended terror of his wife's displeasure. "I assure you, not one cent of mine has been spent for all this tomfoolery."

"Now, Uncle Rufus!" exclaimed Fan, triumphantly, "you and Nell are welcome to your secret; it is ours now just as much as yours."

"You can't but say that we kept it well. Nell and I are first-class caterers, and we know how to keep our own counsel."

"It must have been sweet counsel in this case," said Dr. Parker.

"Decidedly cold, I should say," chimed in Fan; "if it were any thing like this cream. Ugh! I'm freezing!"

"There are no grapes so sour as those which hang beyond our reach, Fan. Perhaps if you had been admitted to our counsel it would have been warmer, possibly sweeter."

"There is not the slightest doubt of it. I should have shaken you all up, till you were in a complete glow."

"The reflex influence of which would have melted the cream," supplemented Dr. Parker.

"Mr. Horton's carriage!" announced the waiter.

“Ha! Fan; you and I must part. Would that time would admit of our smoking the pipe of peace together; but I ordered the carriage at ten, and my coachman is promptness itself. Never mind, Fan, in lieu of the calumet, take this,” pressing a resounding kiss upon either cheek.

“Doctor Parker, you are certainly not going to leave us to-night,” said Mrs. Ormsbee, as the reverend gentleman took up his hat and gloves.

“Thank you,” he replied. “I have accepted Mr. Horton’s invitation. You are exceedingly kind, but I have a little business which must be attended to in the morning, and as I am due in New York in the evening, I must use some dispatch.”

He had no opportunity for farewell words with Alice, but a warm pressure of the hand, and a cordial “Good-bye, daughter,” spoke to her heart the fervent blessing which his lips had no chance to form.

“Fred,” said Uncle Rufus, entering Mr. Ormsbee’s office, the next morning, “that’s a likely lad you’ve got there.”

“Where?” he asked, looking up from his papers, with a smile.

“That Tony. I rather like him; think there’s stuff in him.”

“Yes,” was the rather preoccupied answer; “I think we will make something of the boy after awhile.”

"Ahem!—seems to me you're rather busy to-day, aren't you?"

"Well, yes, rather; excuse me a moment, Uncle Rufus, while I just run over these papers, and then I shall be at liberty to talk to you."

Mr. Horton sat whistling about five minutes, when his nephew folded up the documents, and, inclosing them in an envelope, called out,

"Henry, take this to White, Marshall, & Co. Stop at the post-office on your way back, and return as quickly as possible."

"I will, sir," answered the boy, and, bowing, he departed on his errand.

"Now, Uncle Rufus—"

"What do you say to a transfer?" he began, abruptly.

"Transfer of what?"

"Of interests, responsibility, or whatever you choose to call it. Fact is, Fred, I want that boy. Here I am, a selfish old fellow—"

"Selfish!" interrupted his listener. "You are any thing but selfish. I will not allow you to libel yourself so."

"Well, well, you know I have nobody that is dependent upon me for either support or happiness, except dear old Betsey. She and I are both getting on in years, and we want some one to pet and coddle; some one who will pet and coddle us in return. You, with your happy family around you, don't know

what a desolate thing it is to grow old without any young faces smiling up into yours, without any youthful hearts throbbing at your side, any one to love you and mourn for you when the grass is waving over your grave."

"What has brought you to such a vein of thought? You are not wont to be morbid or sentimental in your feelings. You want stirring up. Come up to-night and have a battle with Fan. See if that will not scatter all these womanish fancies to the winds."

"Womanish! Do you call it womanish to desire to win the love of one's kind? To possess, if not the exclusive, at least, the true affection of some human being? Perhaps it is wrong—this seeking after human love and praise; but I confess that it is my nature. I trust my Saviour is supreme in my heart, but it is a bitter thought that if I should lose my Betsey my hold upon earthly love would be by the frailest tenure whose sundering would be of small moment."

"You surprise me," was the reply. "This is all nonsense. Why, I know of no one who would be more regretted than yourself, should it please God to remove you. Think of the scores whom you have helped to comfort, if not to competency, and then talk about not being missed or cared for. There is one household, at least, where your presence is always welcome, and where your prolonged absence

would create sorrow and great darkness. My children all think there is no one like Uncle Rufus."

"May be so, because the old man makes sport for them; but, Fred, Betsey and I both want some one to whom, in a certain sense, we are necessary. No one likes to feel that after he has been engulfed the ripples will quickly pass away, and leave the surface calm and clear, as though his submersion had never disturbed the glassy bosom of the stream. Selfish, it may be, but we all love to feel that some heart-throbs will follow our departure—that some hand will strike the chords in a minor key—and that with some loved one our memory will dwell, a perennial wreath of fragrance and beauty. I want a feeling as near akin to fatherhood as may be. Now, if you will let me have that boy, I will adopt him, and grant him all the privileges which I would have accorded to my own son, if it had pleased the great Father to have honored me so much. He shall have a full collegiate course, the choice of any profession, and shall inherit the bulk of my property when I am done with it. Don't deny me, Fred; my heart is set upon it. You have plenty to make your home bright and cheerful; let me have my boy."

"Of course, you shall have him, if such is your feeling," replied Mr. Ormsbee, much touched by the unwonted seriousness of his tone and manner. "Without doubt, Tony will be glad to make the exchange. Have you hinted the matter to him?"

"Not a word, not a word; I would not do that, you know, until I had obtained your consent."

"That you have," was the prompt rejoinder. "Come up this evening, can't you, and we will talk it over with Tony?"

"All right," he answered, in his usual cheery manner, and, whistling a lively tune, he left the office.

That evening, while conning his tasks for the next day, Tony was somewhat surprised by receiving a summons to the library.

"Come in," said Mr. Ormsbee, as the slight knock fell upon the door. "Be seated, Tony, I wish to talk to you a little."

Tony glanced from one to the other of the two gentlemen, in doubt and some trepidation as to what could be the purport of a formal meeting which appeared to him rather portentous. His conscience acquitted him of any occasion for blame or fault-finding, and the perplexity was rising to fever heat, when Mr. Ormsbee said,

"Well, Tony, are you ready to go back to Rodman Farm?"

"No, sir," he replied, in a firm, manly tone.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Horton, with an abruptness which almost startled the boy.

"Because, sir, having given up that sort of life, and acquired a taste for something higher and better, I propose to pursue it."

A low, prolonged h-e-m came from Mr. Horton's

compressed lips, and his nephew thought he detected an inward chuckle, which was indicative of intense satisfaction.

"Thanks to kind friends," continued the boy, "I have learned considerable, and there is that within me which tells me that I shall not stop here—that I shall know more; much more, before I die, that I shall accomplish something and gain a name which will make them glad that they ever befriended me. At least, it shall not be my fault if I do not," he added, while a burning flush stole over his plain features.

"That is bravely spoken, my boy," said Mr. Ormsbee. "Carry that resolution with you, and you will conquer all difficulties. Make the education which you have thus far received your stock in trade, and with the undaunted spirit which you manifest, you will double your capital in a short time. Many a boy has started out in life much younger than you, and under far less favorable circumstances, and reached high positions of trust and responsibility. In this independent country every one has a place in the general scramble for wealth and position. Always remember that God's providence is over all. If you start with firm principles of honor and integrity, determined to stand up for truth and justice, you may not accumulate treasure, as the world accounts riches, but you will have heavy investments in another world. Solomon, you know,

says, 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.' ”

Whither did all this tend? After having been enticed from his former indolent content, was he to be cast off to angle for himself in a stream where many older and more experienced than he had, with supreme disappointment, drawn in a baitless hook?

Mr. Horton had been drumming on the table near which he sat, a silent listener. Now, however, a broad smile broke over his face, and, extending both hands, he said,

“Come hither, boy! So you wouldn't like to go to digging potatoes again, eh?”

“No, sir,” he answered, proudly; “and I have no intention of doing so. Rodman Farm will never see me there again in that capacity.”

“Good for you!” exclaimed his listener, giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder. “You shall not go back there, Tony,” he added, with something like a sob in his voice. “If you will go to brighten the home and hearts of two childless old fogies, you shall be a son to them in every thing but birth. No son ever had more affectionate or more indulgent parents than I promise you. You shall be the darling of our old age, and the pride and joy of our declining days. It will be sweet to have a son on whose broad, young shoulders I can roll off my burden of responsibility and care, and who will smooth and cheer

our journey down the hill by his affectionate ministrations."

Tony was painfully embarrassed and utterly at a loss for a reply. At length, gathering his scattered senses, he said, with some hesitation,

"You cannot mean this, sir?"

"Mean it! of course, I mean it. I never was so deeply in earnest but once in my life, and that was when I asked my Betsey to be my wife."

Then rising and throwing an arm around the boy's shoulder, he proceeded, in persuasive accents,

"Come, my son, the son of my heart. You shall succeed to my name, and all that I have. By the way, I have never heard you called any thing but 'Tony.' What patronymic do you boast of?"

"My father's name is Bishop, sir," replied the boy, promptly.

"Bishop! Ah! I see. Well, the truth is that I don't care about my son being called 'Tony,' because, you see, I don't like it. I should like you to take my name, my boy, in order that it may be perpetuated; so, if you don't object, we will call you Bishop, and retaining simply the initial of the first, write it A. Bishop Horton. How will that do? Rather more dignified than 'Tony,' isn't it?"

"Tony," as we must still call him, was about, in unequivocal terms, to coincide with Mr. Horton's wish and seal the bargain, when the thought of poor old shambling Zeke and overworked, disheartened Polly

came to him, with something like the natural affection with which a child clings to a parent, even though he be poor, ignorant, and low down in the social scale.

“Mr. Horton,” he replied, choking back the emotion which, boy though he was, for a moment clogged his throat, “you are very kind to make me this offer—much kinder than I can understand. I am a poor boy, and can give you nothing in return.”

“Don’t want any thing in return but affection and obedience,” interrupted the excited old man.

“Those you shall have, sir, in any case, whether I can accept your kindness or not; but you know, sir, my parents are living, and I, as a minor, am not at liberty to enter upon such an arrangement without their consent and approval. I will write to my father to-night, and communicate his answer to you as soon as I receive it.”

“Well, well, you are right. Stupid donkey that I was, not to think so far. I suppose I must be content. But you will come and live with us, at all events; there can be no objection to that, even if you do not assume my name. Gather up a few duds that you may need to-night, and we will send for your trunk in the morning.”

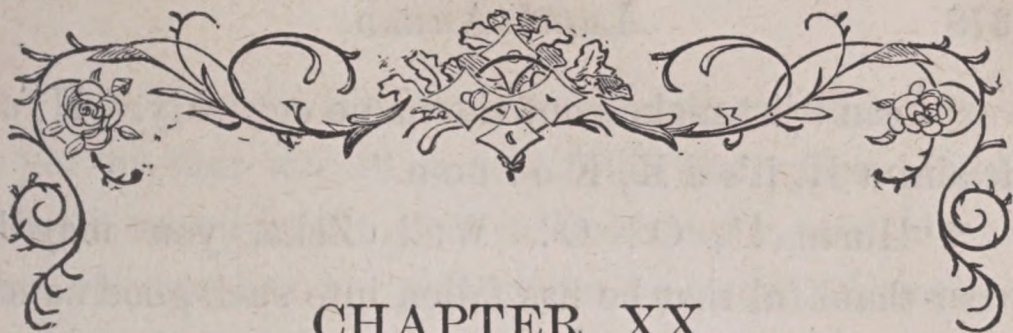
“To-night, sir?” repeated the boy, in surprise.

“Yes, no time like the present. Betsey and I want our son with us, and she is at home, waiting impatiently to welcome him. Run away now, and get

ready. Your room is prepared for you, and you must occupy it to-night."

An hour later the doors of a stately mansion on aristocratic Beacon Street were opened to receive the adopted son and heir of Rufus Horton.





CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Mr. Morrison took from the post-office a letter bearing the superscription, "Mr. Ezekiel Bishop," he scarcely recognized the title, the sobriquet "Zeke" being the only name by which its owner was ever addressed.

"Wal!" exclaimed the latter, as he received his property from Mr. Morrison's hand. "Who's ben an' wrote me, I'd like ter know?" Throwing himself at full length on the grass, he proceeded, in a leisurely manner, to con, in his unskillful fashion, the rather lengthy epistle.

"La sakes!" he said, looking up at Mr. Morrison, who was standing near, "Ef I mustn't go an' tell Polly. She'll hev a conniption, Polly will."

"What's the matter now, Zeke?" he asked, laughing. "Does that letter contain any very startling intelligence?"

"Would yer b'lieve it! That ther' boy o' mine hes found a mighty rich man wot wants ter 'dopt him, an' he aint satisfied with his own name wat's allers ben good 'nough for him, but he wants him ter take his'n. Jist 's if the boy's father didn't know enough ter name him."

"Who is the man?" asked Mr. Morrison.

"I can't jist make eout the name egzackly. H, no, it aint a H, it's a K, K-o-r-t-o-n."

"'Horton!' O! O! Well, Zeke, you may be very thankful that he has fallen into such good hands. Mr. Horton will make a man of him."

"But don't yer jist see, he wont be my boy no longer, cos he can't go by my name no longer! La sakes!" he continued, suddenly changing his tone, "I allus knowed ther was sunthin' inter that boy. Didn't I used ter tell Mister Ben so? I knowed it, cos he used to lay reound in the grass lookin' up inter the sky. I knowed he was a thinkin' an' a thinkin', an some day I 'spect ter see sunthin' o' his wat 'ill make yer hair stan' on eend."

"I hope I sha'n't see it then, Zeke."

"Wal, I 'spect he'll be a great man an' wont take no notice o' his father; but, la sakes! I must go an' tell Polly. She don't know nothin' abeout it, an' she'll be dretful sot up, Polly will."

Mr. Morrison knew that in the midst of Zeke's apparent unwillingness to accede to Mr. Horton's wishes he was inwardly chuckling over his brilliant prospects—so he left him to follow the drift of his own peculiarities.

One day, on his return from school, Tony found in his room a soiled, begrimed envelope, directed in a cramped, scraggy hand, evidently the work of an unskillful penman. Opening it hurriedly, he found the following remarkable literary production:

"SON TONY: i allus knowed thar was sunthin' more n yer an ther was in comon folks, cos yer was allus a layin round in the grass a lookin up i spect ef i let thet ere man hev yer yerl git ter be some hiferlutiner an yer wont never take no notice o yer ole father wal sonny yer may no lots an heaps o thins but i dunno s that any thin great yer no yersel sonny my eddication aint never done me no good but then i don't keer any this here man he wants yer ter give up my name an take hisn i dont think hisns any better n mine the Bishops hes allus ben spectable eddicated peple but la sakes as Polly says it dont make no diference shes willin an so i spose ill hev ter be.

"yer lovin father

ZEKEL BISHOP."

For the first time a flush of mortification dyed his cheeks as he thought of presenting the missive to Mr. Horton for his perusal. His resolution was quickly taken. He could not make this display of his father's almost unparalleled ignorance, but he would make a verbal statement of its contents. Seeking his adopted father, for such he already considered him, he gave a synopsis of the letter. The intelligence gave the old gentleman unmitigated delight, and his thoughts instantly turned, lawyer-like, to the necessary legal formalities.

"You know, Bishop," he said, rubbing his hands with boyish glee, "I want the matter fixed so that I sha'n't be robbed of my boy." Looking at his watch,

he continued: "There is sufficient time to attend to it this afternoon. Let us go at once." Seizing the arm of his companion, he trudged off to secure the accomplishment of his purpose.

A few days subsequently, as the girls were on the croquet lawn, for an hour's exercise, Maud, leaning leisurely on her mallet, exclaimed:

"O, Fan! look down the street. See who is coming!"

"His Judgeship!" announced Fan. A name by which she had already begun to designate Tony, or Bishop, as we must now call him.

"He has stopped under the apple-tree, as I live. O! for some Maud Muller, with 'graceful ankles, bare and brown,' to complete the picture."

Fan's simile was, by no means, an unapt one, for in a moment Bishop

"Came slowly riding down the lane,
Stroking his horse's chestnut mane."

"Why, Tony!" shouted Fan, her tripping tongue utterly disregarding its use of the discarded name. "What a lovely pony!"

"Isn't she a beauty?" replied her owner, proudly, as he sprung from the saddle and patted her graceful head, "She's as gentle as a woman."

"A bad comparison," said Nellie, laughing; "women are not all gentle."

"That is the tribute which is generally paid to

them," he replied, lifting his cap, "at least by the other sex."

"What do you call her?" interrupted Maud.

"I have not named her yet," he answered, slightly hesitating. "I was hoping you young ladies would furnish me with a name."

"Call her Diana," suggested Fan.

"What would be your choice, Miss Alice?" he asked, slightly coloring.

"Why, I scarcely know," she replied, thoughtfully, "and yet, if she were mine, I think I would call her Hippona."

"Thank you," he answered, quietly; "that shall be her name."

"I suppose," said Fan, abruptly, "this is the first-fruits of the harvest you will reap. Uncle Rufus is generosity itself, and the mines of Golconda can hardly afford jewels rich enough to adorn one whom he loves."

"Here is another proof of the truth of your words," he replied, displaying a costly watch and chain which he had that morning received.

"Ah, Tony," said Nellie, "you are a lucky boy." Then, recollecting herself, she added, "Girls, we must positively teach our tongues to address this young gentleman by his new name. Uncle Rufus will be displeased."

"Whew! I have almost forgotten my errand," rejoined the boy, quickly. "Mr.— my father proposes

that we shall all go to the woods on Saturday to gather nuts. He says the nipping frost of the last few nights will bring them down in showers. We will take our luncheon and have a jolly time."

"O glorious!" exclaimed Maud and Fan, simultaneously; and the latter continued, "A day in the woods will be delightful."

Mallets and balls were quickly gathered up, and the jubilant group eagerly repaired to the house to acquaint Mrs. Ormsbee with the projected trip.

Breakfast was but just dispatched on Saturday morning when Uncle Rufus's cheery voice was heard sounding from the lawn, where, as generalissimo, he was marshaling his forces. The pure October air seemed to have infused its vitalizing properties into his blood, for he was as spry and frisky as the youngest of the party. By nine o'clock they commenced the ascent of a steep hill, whose summit was crowned by a dense forest, thickly interspersed with chestnut-trees, whose treasures were to be transferred to the numerous bags and baskets provided for the purpose.

"Uncle Rufus," asked Maud, "do the chestnuts grow thickly here?"

"Thick as blackberries. They are literally as the Irishman expected to find the gold in the streets when he came to America. 'Faith,' he said, 'an' I'll not be takin' me ould duds wid me. Sure, I'll be rich intirely when I git there. I've only to shtoop and pick up the goold be handfuls.'"

"Simpleton!" exclaimed Fan. "But, after all, may be we'll find the chestnuts just about as plenty as he did the gold."

"Unbeliever," was the stern reply, while the speaker assumed an angry scowl. "Is it possible that you do not credit my report of this goodly land! I tell you we have only to put forth our hands and secure the prize. In punishment of your doubt of my unquestionable authority, I hereby prohibit you from your share of the spoil, and forbid, upon pain of a similar sentence, any assistance to be tendered to you by my coadjutors."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Fan; "what a dear, inexorable old tyrant it is."

"A veritable Shylock, as you will find to your cost, unless some generous Portia comes to your relief."

"That she will be sure to do," she retorted, gayly. "I see a Portia-like sympathy in Alice's eyes."

"What if my eyes speak false sentiments?"

"They do not. They are pure, truthful eyes. I will trust them."

"Now, doubter!" exclaimed Uncle Rufus, as he drove into the heart of the forest, and reined in his horses, "I condemn you to solitary state. Keep your seat while the rest appropriate your share of the nutty treasure."

"I obey your mandate," she replied, laughing heartily. Jumping lightly to the ground, she scam-

pered off, and, gathering a double handful of crisp, dried leaves, she scattered them in a shower of fragments all over the jolly figure before her.

The woods were gorgeous in the October sunlight. The stately oak, with its autumn vestment of russet hue, lifted its dignified head toward heaven, while the maple and birch flaunted their crimson and yellow banners in the face of the blue sky.

"Take care, Miss Alice," said Bishop, approaching her; "these burs are not intended for delicate fingers to open. Let me beat out the nuts for you;" and, suiting the action to the word, he went vigorously at work.

"No, Alice," said Uncle Rufus, who stood near, and heard Bishop's remark, "they are not. They are like the trials of this life. They present a rough exterior, but contain the germs of much sweetness and ultimate good."

"Yes," she replied, "and how beautiful they look with their glossy coats against their satiny beds."

"Uncle Rufus," said Nellie, piteously, "I have scratched my hands sadly. Will you please beat out the nuts for me?"

"No wonder," he retorted; "such white kid hands were not made to open chestnut burs."

"White kid hands?" she repeated.

"Yes; what do you call these?" he asked, seizing both her hands, and smoothing the delicate skin.

"Ah, Nell, they are not fit for the rough and tumble of life, are they?"

"I don't know, Uncle Rufus. You know the back is fitted for the burden, and so, I suppose, the hands are, too."

"Yes," he replied, with a serious smile, "'He knoweth all them that are his,' and he provideth for them, too."

"See! see!" exclaimed Fan, rushing up and displaying a well-filled basket of somewhat diminutive proportions. "What's the matter, Nell—hurt your hands?"

"Yes; I scratched them fearfully with the burs. Why, yours are not at all injured."

"No, no," laughed Uncle Rufus, "her brown paws can stand any thing. How now, Fan, off for another basket of trophies?"

"Yes," she answered. "Portia and I are doing wonders in the nut-gathering line, only she is so quiet about it."

"You! you had better say Portia. Quiet people do the work. You bustlers never accomplish much beyond a continual buzz."

"Now, Uncle Rufus, we believe in the division of labor. I beat them out, and she gathered them."

"That's all right, Fan; my impression was that she did all the work and you took all the praise."

"A grand mistake, sir," she quickly retorted, as she capered off to join her colaborer.

"What are you thinking about, Alice?" asked Uncle Rufus, a few moments later, as the latter stood thoughtfully regarding a broken cluster from whose inmost heart the contents had just been removed.

"I was thinking," she replied, "how much these rough, ugly-looking things are like some human beings."

"Yes," said Nellie, "they turn all that is sharp and rugged in their natures toward us, while they conceal in the inmost recesses of their hearts an untold wealth of gentleness and love."

"Your description, Nellie," said Uncle Rufus, "exactly tallies with that of a man whom I once knew. He was a perfect porcupine, the sharp quills bristling all over him to ordinary observers—I was about to say associates, but of the latter he could boast but few. Men do not care to consort with one of that temperament. He always reminded me of a cat, whose fur is full of electricity, and is standing on end, giving the animal a ruffled, angry appearance. Well, this man, while he presented that aspect to his equals, would go to the alleys and by-ways of the city, and, gathering the ragged little urchins, would entice them to some baker's shop, where, after supplying their childish demands, he would, as though ashamed of his weakness, with a harsh word send them all scampering back to their wretched homes, as though the demon of destruction were at their heels. Dumb brutes and birds partook of his care, and he has often

made the fatherless to rejoice and the widow's heart sing for joy."

"What an anomaly such a character presents," said Nellie. "It seems strange that such contradictory traits can exist in one person."

"Not so strange, Nellie," answered Uncle Rufus, "when we consider that we are all creations of the one great Spirit, who plants within us the germs of these incongruous traits, and can, if he so will, develop and assimilate them, thus forming a solid character of wondrous beauty and power."

Suddenly a blast swept through the branches overhead, wailing and souging among the pines, and swaying the scions of the forest with a power which threatened to uproot even the parent tree.

"Whew!" exclaimed Uncle Rufus. "There's going to be a tempest. Bishop, my boy, we must hasten to get these pieces of porcelain under shelter before the storm breaks upon us."

"Porcelain, indeed!" retorted Fan, indignantly; "I am formed of no such frail material, thank you. Nell and Alice are the delicate ones. Look out for them. I am not afraid to face the storm. I am made of iron nerves, muscles, and sinews."

"True courage is like charity," replied Uncle Rufus, dryly. "It vaunteth not itself. It will surprise me, Fan, if you do not prove the most timid of all. Delicate bodies often contain the most courageous and invincible hearts."

Fan's reply was checked by a blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a crashing peal of thunder, which shook the forest to its center, unsettling the loose earth and fragments of rock which, at some past time, had suffered upheaval. The hearts of the trembling group began to quail, and they turned eagerly to Uncle Rufus, as though protection from the elements lay within his scope and power. Even Fan forgot to boast of her bravery, and settled down to her place in the open carriage without her usual light-hearted badinage.

"Now, Bishop," said Uncle Rufus, "we will press forward as rapidly as possible, and may be at home before the storm reaches its height. If not, we must seek shelter elsewhere."

"Hark," said Nellie, "how the wind shrieks among these tall trees! Do let us get away immediately. It sounds so weird and unearthly."

The wind being in that direction bore to their ears the hoarse roar of the ocean, as the white-crested breakers thundered in upon the shore, increasing the terror which was fast settling upon them.

Bishop had mounted his pony, and was riding silently by Alice's side, having an instinctive feeling, which inheres in all true hearts of the other sex, that a delicate woman is, in herself, a mute appeal for protection and sympathy.

The heavens were enfolded in impenetrable folds of inky blackness, while the rain beat upon their

unprotected heads with, terrible persistency. They had left the woods behind them, and nothing sheltered them from the unmitigated fury of the storm. Sleet, hail, and rain came against their enduring cheeks, drenching them to the skin, and almost blinding both horses and riders. All they could do was to urge the horses forward at their utmost speed, and the noble animals, seeming to realize the situation, dashed on, nor for one moment abated their speed.

"Keep stout hearts, girls!" said Uncle Rufus, turning to the little huddled group. "We'll be at home before very long. Hero and Noble can cover a great deal of ground in a short time. Bishop," he added, "we must be near some human habitation, although it is so thick and dark that I cannot see. You had better go on and seek shelter, and we will follow."

"Yes, sir," he answered; "and, if I am not mistaken, I see a light before me now."

Bishop's vision was not deceived, and he soon came to a blacksmith's shop, whose anvil-fire was the light which had greeted him through the thick darkness. Dashing up to the door, he inquired if there were a house near where a drenched party could find a shelter from the storm.

"Yes," was the ready response, "my house is a few rods farther on. Don't be backward, sir; you will find shelter there. My old woman will do all she can to make the ladies and gentlemen comfortable."

"Thank you," replied the boy; "but, with your permission, I will remain here until the others come up, and will proceed with them."

"All right, sir," he answered, cheerily. "That's a fine beast of yourn."

"Yes," replied Bishop, as he rubbed down her wet sides with a handful of straw. "Ah! here they come."

"Father!" he called out, as Uncle Rufus reined up his horses, "the blacksmith's house is a few rods farther on; he says we can go there."

"Strikes me," was the laughing reply, "that this big, blazing fire is just what would suit our purpose, if we might be permitted to appropriate it."

"Certainly, sir," said the good-natured smith; "come in, and welcome."

The dripping, shivering group were soon steaming around the bright fire, hugely enjoying its warmth and cheer. An old shed adjoining the smithy afforded shelter for the horses and carriage, the cushions being removed from the latter, and placed in a position where they would be thoroughly dried, while Uncle Rufus and Bishop went vigorously to work rubbing down the drenched and panting horses.

The storm continued with unabated violence, until Uncle Rufus, feeling that the smith must be thinking of closing up for the night, looked at his watch, exclaiming,

"Six o'clock! Well, youngsters, we must make a

move of some kind. Shall we push on through the storm?"

"Would it be possible," asked Nellie, "to procure a covered vehicle of any kind?"

"Yes, miss, I think so," replied the man. "My neighbor, in the house next to mine, has a covered wagon I think you might get. It may not be very stylish," he added, with a glance at Nell, "but it would keep you all dry."

"No matter for the style," answered Uncle Rufus, "as long as it will transport these young ducklings to the parent nest."

Without waiting to hear more Bishop vaulted into his saddle, again facing the driving storm to procure, if possible, some mode of dry transportation. Dashing up to the door, he made known his errand to the woman, who promptly responded to his summons.

"I am sorry," she answered, "but my husband went to Boston this morning, and has not got back."

Instantly his resolution was taken. He remembered having seen a livery stable some half a mile farther on, so, thanking the woman, he started on a hard gallop toward that as a last resort. His demand for a close carriage was met by the reply:

"Well, we aint got but one close kerridge, and we don't care to send it out in this drivin' rain; besides, that has to have two hosses, and one of mine's lame, and it would be wuth a good deal to send him out

such a night as this. How fur is the place from here?"

Bishop hastened to inform him of the exact length of the trip he would be required to take, as also that he should be well paid for his services. Taking the latter assurance into consideration, he very amiably condescended to prepare his establishment for exposure to the elements.

Bishop penciled a few lines on a card, which he desired the driver to hand to the gentleman, and then made as rapidly as possible for Mr. Ormsbee's house, about ten miles away, in order to relieve the anxious minds he knew he should find there.

Many exclamations of delight hailed the long-looked-for vehicle.

Hero and Noble were quickly prepared, Mr. Horton, from his sheltered seat in the hired carriage, holding the reins, and so the cavalcade started forward. The two well-trained steeds would have started briskly, but the poor lame beast labored painfully, and they were obliged to curb their impatience as best they might.

"Hallo, driver!" shouted Uncle Rufus, "when we reach your place we'll change off. Detach your horses; mine will take us the rest of the way. I will leave my carriage in your care until morning."

"All right, sir."

After floundering about the wet roads, the poor, jaded horse was glad to stop for even a moment's rest.

"Now, my man," said Uncle Rufus, "we will dispense with your services. I will return in the morning and make a fair exchange."

Taking a bank-note from his pocket-book, he handed it to the man with his card.

"Thank you, sir," and with an obsequious bow he gathered up the reins and placed them in the outstretched hand.

Mr. Ormsbee's house was all alight, and never did its glow and cheer gleam so beacon-like as when breaking through the gloom and darkness of that stormy night.

"Well, old woman!" shouted Uncle Rufus, as the face and figure of his wife greeted him from the open hall door. "All right! no broken heads."

"Nor broken hearts," supplied Mr. Ormsbee.

"Bless you, no! Here, Mary, I've brought your chicks all back. Imagined all sorts of horrors, I'll be bound."

"Not that," she answered, smiling; "although I confess I should have been very anxious but for Bishop's thoughtfulness."

"Bless the boy! Where is he?"

"Toasting before a glowing fire in the library."



CHAPTER XXI.

SIXTEEN to-day! Five years have passed with their usual velocity; neither accelerated nor retarded by the fluctuations incident to the life of all. Alice found herself upon the threshold of life. The years which have gone have been but a passage-way to the great arena which now opens before her. Childhood and school days behind, before stretches the wide, unknown, untrodden future. As she sits in the quiet library, putting the finishing touches to the valedictory which she is to deliver to-morrow, her thoughts take a backward turn, and, laying down the paper, she closes her eyes, and yields to the memories that come clustering around her, like a swarm of humming-birds around the heart of a fragrant flower.

She has studied hard, much beyond her strength, and attained the highest honors of the institution. To-morrow she expects to take leave of her Alma Mater and all its associations.

“And what then?” she asks herself. “What awaits me? Shall I leave books and thoughts behind me, and, having finished my education, relapse into the intellectual nonentity which so many women become? Never! I firmly believe, without flattering

myself, that God has given me talents, which are not to be wrapped in a napkin, but to be used, and, with his help, I am resolved to use them to the best possible advantage for his glory and the good of my fellow-creatures. Why may I not write words which shall prove a balm to some sorrowing heart? I am very young, but I have known sorrow, and out of that sad experience may be able to comfort some who are drinking the bitter dregs. Dear mamma! O! I shall see her in the morning, and darling Mabel, and auntie, too. It seems like too much happiness.

“Dear, sweet Mabel; I wonder if she is as happy now as before her marriage. She possesses such an unselfish disposition, no one would ever know if she were unhappy; she would keep it all within her own heart. But I will not fear for her, only I am so jealous of her peace of mind, I could not bear to see her disturbed. All this is very silly; Robert seems kind and good—who could be otherwise to such a loving, gentle nature; so I will borrow no trouble on her account.”

Hearing a footstep approaching, she opened her eyes and saw Aunt Betsey’s kind, sympathizing face smiling upon her.

“Excuse me, dear,” she said, “for interrupting you, but Uncle Rufus and another gentleman are in the parlor waiting to see you.”

“To see me?” she asked, in amazement; “what can they possibly want of me?”

"You will see presently. Rufus wanted to come right in here, but I thought I had better tell you first."

"Always kind and thoughtful," replied Alice, gratefully, at the same time printing an affectionate kiss on Aunt Betsey's withered cheek.

"Shall I let them come in?"

"Please."

Gathering up her papers, she turned, in wondering expectation, toward the door.

"Hallo, Alice!" was Uncle Rufus's characteristic greeting, as he seized both her hands. "I've brought an old friend to see you, one of the dreaded fraternity of editors, with whom, I believe, it is your ambition to have some dealings. Mr. Ludlum, my young friend, Miss Hamilton."

Alice smiled as she acknowledged the stranger's greeting, but made no reply, waiting a further revelation from the ever-ready tongue of the first speaker. Not a word did he vouchsafe, however, and Mr. Ludlum hastened to relieve her embarrassment by saying,

"My friend, Mr. Horton, has given me rather an undesirable introduction, Miss Hamilton. I hope I shall yet have the opportunity of proving to you that I am not exactly that which he describes, a *dreaded* editor."

"I hope not," was her ambiguous reply, in her consternation scarce knowing whether that was a correct answer, or whether she should have said, "Ah,

yes, or no," at the same time casting an appealing look at Uncle Rufus, to which that gentleman responded by saying,

"Don't look at me. Here, Ludlum, transact your own business, and remember it's none of my doing. I wash my hands of the whole matter."

"Well, then, Miss Hamilton," replied the latter, smiling, "notwithstanding Mr. Horton's denial of any complicity in this affair, he has placed in my hands a poem which he represents to have been written by yourself. I will submit to you the article in question, in order that you may be able to settle my doubt as to the degree of fraud of which my friend has been guilty, whether he has willfully misrepresented the authorship of the piece, or whether he has purloined your property from its private receptacle."

"Now, Ludlum," replied the individual in question, "I protest against this line of procedure. The poem, like several others which you, sir, have appropriated to your own use and that of your readers, was handed me by my true and lawful wife, Mrs. Betsey Horton, with the information that this young lady aspired to authorship, and a request that I would assist her to make it available. Remembering that I had a friend who makes his living, and, if truth is to be told, a good surplus out of the brains of other people, it struck me that I might help him along by giving him another set of wits to work upon. Now,

Alice, see if you recognize your property, and acquit me of the charge of 'purloining it from its private receptacle.' "

Seizing the paper, he commenced, in a declamatory tone, "Backward and Forward, by Miss Alice Hamilton," and then read aloud the entire poem. Alice scarcely recognized her own work, for Uncle Rufus's declamation was of a fine order, and, becoming imbued with the spirit of the young authoress, his rendering of it almost made her doubtful of its real authorship.

"O, Uncle Rufus!" she exclaimed, at its conclusion, "that is my work, but how you have improved it! What have you done to it?"

"Done to it! Nothing, I assure you; nothing! only brought out its fine points by my inimitable powers of oratory. Now, judge; am I cleared from this heinous charge?"

"Cleared, and honorably discharged," was the laughing reply. "Now, Miss Hamilton, with your permission, I will publish your poem, which, allow me to say, is exceedingly creditable for an unfledged authoress. Will that remunerate you?" he asked, laying a ten-dollar note upon the table before her.

"O, Mr. Ludlum," she cried, "you cannot mean that. Why, the poem is only one of my school compositions, and cannot be worth so much."

"None the worse for that, and you know I have had the gratuitous use of one or two of your produc-

tions before ; so pray have no scruples in accepting the money. I shall not be too generous, I promise you. I congratulate you," he added, rising, and extending his hand, "upon your budding talent, and sincerely hope and predict that it will blossom out into a full-blown, fragrant, and remunerative flower."

"Thank you," she answered, in a low tone, scarcely knowing whether the inclination to laugh or cry were uppermost.

"Come, wife!" shouted Uncle Rufus, from the foot of the stairs ; "stop your gossip, and come along. It's time all respectable people were homeward bound."

"Uncle Rufus!" exclaimed Alice, seizing his hands, and drawing him into the silent parlor, "how shall I ever thank you?"

"Tut, tut," he answered, stroking her cheek. "None of that, 'an you love me. Come, wife!" And closing the street door with a bang, the trio departed, leaving Alice standing in the deserted room.

"Ah!" she thought, "is this a gleam of the bright future I have so long looked forward to? Ah! mamma darling, your daughter will accomplish something yet."

That precious ten-dollar note! Was it not a good omen? an earnest of the abundant harvest which continued and more careful effort might yield?

She was too much excited to sleep well. Bright

visions were constantly dancing before her eyes, the greater excitement of the evening completely overshadowing the lesser one of the morrow, in which she was to play a conspicuous part. Already, in imagination, book after book had been written and published. Already she had reached the acme of her ambition—a successful authorship.

“O, mamma!” she exclaimed, with feverish impatience, “will the morning never come? How slowly the hours draw themselves along.”

Rising, she looked at her watch, auntie’s gift, nearly five years before.

“Two o’clock! and I must wait until seven or eight—she cannot possibly be here sooner—before I can have a good talk with mamma with my arms around her dear, faithful neck. O, if the drowsy god would only perch upon my eyelids!”

Presently the shy little fellow took his station, as she desired, and kept the citadel well guarded until the merry sunlight had been for some time shining in her room. Opening her eyes, she uttered a cry of joy. The warm kiss was upon her lips, the fond arms around her neck, for whose loving pressure she had so eagerly longed.

“Are you ill, darling?” asked her mother, anxiously.

“Not ill, mamma, but O, so tired; but I shall be rested now I have you. Where are the rest?” she added, looking around the room.

"Auntie will be in presently. Mabel and Robert have gone to the park, but will be here in the course of the morning. You had better get up and dress now, dear. Mrs. Ormsbee said breakfast would be ready in half an hour, and the time must be nearly up."

Alice essayed to obey her mother's injunction, but when she attempted to rise her head swam, there was a sound as of the rushing of many waters in her ears, and, closing her eyes, she sank back upon the pillow in utter unconsciousness. She was unable to rise from her bed during the day, but insisted upon sustaining her part of the evening's entertainment.

"Alice," said her mother, "you are utterly unfit to undertake such a task. Had you not better give it up, darling? You are as colorless as your dress."

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar, entering, "if ever I saw a marble statue, here is one! You are certainly not going out, Alice! You look more like spirit than matter."

"Nevertheless, auntie, I am essentially material—of the earth, earthy; very earthy, too, I am afraid."

"But seriously, Alice—"

"Seriously, mamma darling," she replied, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, and cutting off the expostulation with a kiss, "I shall get along bravely, I assure you. The excitement will keep me up, and if I am ill afterward, I shall have you to nurse me well again."

The spacious hall was crowded to excess, and the breath of many flowers made the air heavy, when the young ladies of the graduating class entered and took the seats reserved for them, immediately in front of the platform. The exercises proceeded with marked success, amid many tokens of approbation from the audience; but when the dainty, white-robed figure advanced, valedictory in hand, and, with a graceful inclination, prepared to read from the paper she held, an audible murmur ran through the room.

She commenced in full, clear tones, but after having read a sentence or two, a deadly paleness took the place of the slight tinge which excitement had painted upon her cheeks, and a crimson tide stained the filmy robe which auntie, with loving pride, had provided for her. She was conveyed to an adjoining room, where a physician was promptly in attendance, who insisted upon perfect rest and quiet as the only means of prolonging a life so frail, a spark so faint, that a rough breath might extinguish it. The hemorrhage was stanchd, but a recurrence of it, he said, would be more alarming than the first attack.

Mrs. Ormsbee hastened home, and causing a soft mattress and pillows to be placed in the carriage, sent it back, she herself remaining to see that every thing was in readiness for the comfort of the fair girl, who had attained a place in her affections second only to that occupied by her own daughters. Like a White Rose, indeed, she looked as they bore her to her own

room, her cheeks vieing in paleness with the snowy pillow on which her lovely head reposed.

"Isabel," said Mrs. Dunbar, entering the room where the former sat watching by the bedside of one who seemed more fit to be transported to the heavenly land than to retread the dusty, thorny pathway of life, "I have telegraphed for Dr. Monroe. I will trust our darling in no other hands than his."

"Thank you," was the grateful reply, "you have anticipated my own wish. If he says she must die, I will try to resign her to One who loves her even better than I do."

"She is not going to die," answered the stout-hearted friend; "we will nurse her back to life again."

Seating herself gently by the side of the anxious mother, she said,

"Alice is very dear to me. Remember she is the child of my dearest friend, that friend who led me to think of something besides the transitory pleasures of this life, to realize that I was formed for higher aims and purposes; and I have seen in Alice's pure, unobtrusive piety a beauty which I know was not of earth. O, Isabel!" she continued, with tearful eyes, "if, as I trust and believe, I have found the Saviour, if I ever reach the home of the blessed, I believe it will be through you and your darling Alice."

"You have given me unspeakable pleasure, Mabel,

even in the midst of my sorrow. Alice's life has been a short one, but, if your words are true, she has not lived in vain. I thank my God that he has made my sweet child an instrument of good to so kind and generous a friend."

A slight tap upon the door announced the arrival of the physician, to whom Mrs. Dunbar communicated the fact of her having summoned Dr. Monroe.

"I am glad to hear that you have done so," he replied, cordially. "He cannot possibly be here before evening. I will meet him here, if such is your pleasure, and resign the case into his hands, or act in concert with him, just as you may desire. The patient is doing well now, breathing naturally and sleeping calmly, but I can well understand your wish that she should receive the care of one who has known her from childhood."

Eight o'clock brought Dr. Monroe, much shocked at the change in his young favorite, but, with his usual hopeful view of things, not by any means disposed to take a discouraging estimate of her condition.

"O, doctor!" asked Mrs. Hamilton, in faltering tones, "must—"

"My dear lady, I see no reason to apprehend that which you fear. Be comforted; her youth may enable her to triumph over the disease so entirely that there may never be a return of it. Let me assure you that both Dr. Delafield and myself will do all in

our power, and I am quite sure you are willing to leave the result in higher hands than ours."

The physician's words were like balm to the anxious heart, and, as the sequel proved, savored not too strongly of hope or encouragement. Alice improved rapidly, and at the end of two weeks was able to sit up the greater part of the day. Although pale and feeble, she gave promise of ultimate recovery and a reasonable share of health.

One morning, as she was seated in a low rocking-chair, her white wrapper scarcely whiter than the slender hands which lay listlessly in her lap, Uncle Rufus's hearty tones fell upon her ear as he ascended the staircase. A flush of pleasure overspread her pale features as he entered, closely followed by Aunt Betsey.

"O!" said Alice, brightly, "how glad I am to see you, and dear Aunt Betsey, too. It seems like a glimpse of the outer world."

"Good!" he exclaimed, cheerily. "She's as blithe as a bird this morning. What do you say, birdie, to going down stairs to chirp awhile? There's a nice, cozy lounge in the library, and Mary and my little woman have made up their minds that that's just the place for you. These strong arms can easily carry such a mite;" and, seizing his unresisting burden, he carried her down stairs and deposited her as carefully as an infant among the downy cushions.

The cool morning breeze was gently rustling over

the flower-beds beneath the open window, swaying their delicate petals, and wafting in the odor of mignonette and heliotrope, infusing fresh life and hope into the graceful form reclining there.

It was a thankful, happy group that was gathered in that pleasant room, enjoying that delightful sense of, at least, a partial immunity from a wearing anxiety, which the recovery of a loved one always brings—that sweet feeling of restored companionship, the assured hope that there is to be no broken link in our chain of love, that our household idol is not to be shattered. How joyful the assurance that our indulgent Father is about to intrust the treasure to our keeping a little longer.

Who that has seen this dread shadow remove but has felt his heart spring up with a quick rebound under this inspiring influence. Surely this is not the same world which wore for us an aspect so somber.

Presently a peal at the door-bell warned them that this pleasant scene was to be broken in upon, not unpleasantly, however, as it appeared when the servant announced,

“Dr. Monroe.”

“Well, well,” he said, gayly, “this looks like recovery. Ha, little one! so you have crept out of your nest, have you?”

“O, doctor!” she said, seizing his outstretched hand, “I am so glad to be down stairs again, and so glad to see you, too,” she added, laughing.

"Glad to get better, eh? Well, it strikes me, you're not alone there. I think somebody else is glad, too."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Dunbar, "I have a project in my head which requires your professional sanction; but I am afraid—I am not sure—I don't know."

"Nor I either," interrupted the doctor, laughing heartily. "If I had the slightest loop-hole through which I might get an insight into your meaning, I should be much better qualified to judge whether to yield or withhold my professional sanction."

"Auntie expects a man of your profession and of your astute intellect to divine her meaning without explanation," said Alice, with a mischievous smile. "Isn't that true, auntie?"

"Yes," she answered, briefly. "Galen should be a diviner of mysteries."

"Look out!" said the doctor, shaking his finger playfully at Alice. "You lie still on your lounge, and don't you be taking the part of my adversaries. I'll endure no more penances for your sake, if that is the way you requite me. Now, madam, if it pleases you to eliminate your idea, I will give you my sage opinion and advice."

"She contemplates taking Alice for a trip to the moon, as she thinks the voyage would be eminently beneficial to that young lady," put in Uncle Rufus. "She has been reading the recently disinterred 'Moon Story,' and has no doubt that the islands described

there, with their waving palm-trees and their coral reefs, would prove a charming residence for herself and her fair ward."

"Really, Mr. Horton," rejoined Mrs. Dunbar, laughing, "you display extraordinary powers of intuition. You must have been reading my thoughts. You had better practice the science of psychology."

"Not so difficult a thing to accomplish as one might suppose," he answered. "I'll practice it upon you some time. It would be rare fun to see you unhesitatingly obeying my behests."

"It *will* be rare fun when you see me in that interesting state. I warn you, sir, I should prove a hopeless case. I always was obstinate from a child, and all my powers of resistance would be brought to bear against a person whom I should know to be trying to subdue my mind to his control. But, doctor, to be serious, I was about to propose, not a trip to the moon, but one to the other side of the deep water. I believe the change would be of infinite benefit to our little invalid yonder. What do you think of my idea?"

"Capital!" replied the doctor, heartily. "Now, Mr. Horton, if our friend has entertained the chimera which you attribute to her, I trust you will give her credit for sound sense in its amendment."

"By all means. A most sensible and practicable thought has emanated from that subtle brain of hers."

The projected trip now became a topic of serious

consideration. Doctor Monroe gave it as his opinion that Alice would be able to travel in two or three weeks, and, the season being favorable, he gave the little widow his cheerful concurrence and support.

"Well, old lady!" exclaimed Uncle Rufus, addressing his wife, "what do you say to crossing the big pond? I am anxious that Bishop should have the advantage of travel and foreign study, and now is our chance. Besides, these forlorn ladies ought not to go abroad without some of the 'lords of creation,' and this would be a good opportunity to display my gallantry."

"Fiddlesticks!" burst out Mrs. Dunbar, with more impetuosity than elegance. "I, for my part, have a serious disposition to decline your escort, just to show you what a woman can do."

"It would afford me inexpressible delight to have the conceit taken out of him," said Aunt Betsey, laughing.

"O! Aunt Betsey," replied Alice, mischievously; "he is only a fair specimen of the genus. They are all inflated with an imaginative sense of their own importance."

"Ha! ha! doctor, do you hear that? Inflated with an imaginative sense of our own importance, are we! Ah, ha! my young lady, get up stairs as best you can."



CHAPTER XXII.

ON one of the slopes of sunny France stands an ancient *chateau*, whose ruins are beautified by clambering vines of many years' growth. Life in death, joy in sorrow, hope in despondency, are all symbolized by this vigorous climber, whose subsistence is drawn from the soil which supports this home of a once proud and noble race. Generation after generation has been born within its stately walls, whose only record is, like that of many in the Scriptures, that they lived two, three, or fourscore years, and—they died. An old-fashioned garden surrounds this crumbling pile, in which there is an indigenous growth of various homely plants, whose annual resurrection, in conjunction with the thrifty creeper, relieves the place from the stamp of death and decay.

The air is fragrant with the odor of the box-wood borders of the beds, some of which are overgrown with weeds, while others still preserve their original outline. A very wilderness of sweets is here, on which bees and humming-birds are feasting, whose drowsy, satisfied buzz, together with the subtle perfume in the quiet air, produces a soporific effect upon the occupants of the garden.

Seated in a lovely sheltered nook of this quaint

and almost deserted spot, is a young girl with dreamy eyes and thoughtful air. The large eyes are deep and spiritual in their expression. The dark hair is brushed carelessly back from a low, broad brow, on which the stamp of intellect is unmistakably set. The printed page upon her lap receives but little attention. She seems to have fallen into one of those reveries which, in such an atmosphere, are almost irresistible and very delicious.

A young man, some two years her senior, lies lazily stretched upon a mossy bank at her feet, and, having cast away his book which, strange to say, is neither Shakespeare nor Tennyson, or even our own Longfellow, but a heavy, uninteresting-looking Blackstone, rests his eyes earnestly upon his companion's face.

"Miss Alice," he asked, in a somewhat embarrassed manner, "do you remember a dirty, ragged boy, in whom, some eight years ago, you were the first to take an interest?"

"Yes," she replied, laughing, "I remember, Tony. I may call you Tony once more, may I not?" she asked, playfully."

"You may call me any thing you please," was the low reply. "Any name from your lips would sound sweet to me."

Were this a chronicle of love we would rehearse the conversation which followed; but we will be content with its closing sentences.

"To think," he continued, in a meditative tone,

“of my utter ignorance of the Being who made me, and the Saviour who bought me, until I heard it from your childish lips! It is incredible to me that I could have lived to the age of twelve years, in the midst of Christian people, and never have heard the name of Jesus!”

“You forget,” answered Alice, “what a shy little boy you were, always hiding away somewhere, and hardly ever near the house, you know. I am sure if grandma had suspected the truth, or if you had seen more of her, you would have frequently heard the Saviour’s name, for it was often upon her lips in sweet and loving utterances.”

“Perhaps so. I am not blaming them; only it all seems so strange to me as I look at it now. Alice, I owe every thing I am, or ever hope to be, either in this world or the next, to you. I believe God has made you my good angel; and even if you should spurn me from your feet, I should still look toward you as the one bright memory of my boyhood. You have always seemed to me as I imagine the shining ones must have seemed to Christian—a sort of luminous embodiment of the principles of Christianity. I shall never lose the impression you made upon my childish heart. Every thing upon which your touch has ever rested, has been sacred in my eyes from that day. I know I am not worthy of you. I do not wonder that you turn from me and refuse to listen to the foolish words I have uttered. When I remember

my antecedents, and think what your first feelings on encountering me must have been, I am abashed at my temerity. You, with your family connections, your beauty, and, above all, your glorious talents, may aspire to the highest in the land, while I—”

“Tony,” she interrupted, in a gentle tone, while a rosy flush overspread the pure brow, “I cannot bear to hear you talk so. It is not that—not that I look upon you with any lack of respect or sisterly affection, but you know you have been like a dear brother to me, particularly since we have been abroad, and—and—Tony, I like to call you Tony because it sounds more natural, and recalls so vividly dear Uncle Ben and his noble martyr death. Tony, do not think hardly of me. I think I shall never marry. I have selected my profession, and mean to devote my life to it. Let all this be forgotten, and let us be brother and sister still.”

Looking with misty eyes through the swaying branches of the stately tree which canopied their heads, Tony, or Bishop, as we must call him in the presence of his father, who is approaching, exclaimed,

“Hallo! who comes here? Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Dunbar, my mother and father; and, Alice, who is that stranger with them?”

“I can scarcely see at this distance,” she answered, carelessly. “Some one from the hotel, probably, who has strayed out this way.”

A few moments settled the question. The sounds of voices could be easily discerned before the face of the stranger became visible under his broad straw hat.

"Ah, ha!" shouted Uncle Rufus, "I thought we should find the runaways here. This is a favorite trysting-place. Alice, come here and greet an old friend."

"Nay, but rather let an old friend greet her," was the reply, in Dr. Monroe's familiar tones, as he seized both her hands, which he immediately released, enfolding her in an embrace like a bear.

"Why, Dr. Monroe!" she exclaimed, "did this soft summer air waft you here unconsciously, or did you purposely conceal your intention from us in order to suddenly rush upon us in this unauthorized fashion?"

"Well, Miss Hamilton," he answered, with well-feigned pique, "what does this imply? Dissatisfaction at my arrival, or at an inopportune disturbance of an interesting tete-a-tete?"

"Not a particle of either," she replied, heartily; "you know you are always welcome; but when did you come?"

"Just arrived, like Paddy in the streets of New York. 'Me bit o' baggage an' mesilf, sthrangers intirely,' as he would say. Only, my fair friend!" he exclaimed, as he looked earnestly at the rounded form and the soft cheek, on whose delicate surface

was painted a faint tinge of color, "you have not spent two years abroad for nothing."

"No, indeed," she answered, brightly. I am well, Dr. Monroe, perfectly well. I have no need of your professional services, sir, so please don't reckon me on the invalid list; I never was so far from it in my life."

"Well, you have enjoyed two years of elegant leisure, absolutely nothing to do. Do you indorse the Italian proverb, 'Dolce far niente?'"

"By no means," was her eager reply. "I am utterly tired of this inane, aimless sort of existence. I want to get home and settle down to some definite plan. I want some object, doctor—something to arouse my ambition and awaken my energy, if I have any."

"I was not aware, Miss Hamilton, that that quality of the human mind needed to be aroused in your aspiring breast. I thought it was already soaring on eagle's wings clear up to the highest zenith. Indeed, you surprise me greatly."

"You should not be surprised, and will not be after a few days of observation of my indolent habits. I am most wofully lazy, and all these good people, instead of urging and assisting me to overcome it, have been helping me indulge my propensity."

"Shocking," he answered, gravely. "I should think you would be troubled with qualms of conscience for the remainder of your days."

Alice replied only by a burst of merry laughter, which became contagious, after which Mrs. Hamilton asked,

“Why did you not come sooner? Alice is so anxious to get home, and her health is so thoroughly re-established, that we have decided to go in the early autumn.”

“That will agree precisely with my arrangements,” he answered, carelessly. “My time is limited. I cannot afford to play more than three months at a time. It is quite evident,” he continued, turning toward Alice, as he took up the discarded Blackstone, “that your indolence has not seriously affected any one but yourself. Our embryo counselor, at least, seems to have been improving his time, if this volume speaks truth.”

The gloom which had overspread Bishop's face relaxed into a grave smile, as he answered,

“I am afraid I have not made as good a use of my time as I might have done, doctor. I begin to think much of it has run to waste. This delicious, dreamy atmosphere is not a powerful incentive to vigorous study.”

Bishop had arisen from his recumbent posture, and sitting on the bank upon which he was reclining when we first invaded the demesne which seemed sacred to privacy or confidence, he formed a pleasing addition to a scene which would have presented a fine study for an artist. The ungainly form of his child-

hood had assumed more symmetry of outline and proportion, the greenish gray eyes had deepened and mellowed, the carrotty hair had become darker and more tractable, while the dormant intellect had been aroused, and was spreading its glow over the once stolid countenance.

On their return they found letters awaiting them which made it important that Mr. Horton should be in Boston by the first of November, so their preparations were somewhat expedited.

The afternoon preceding their departure found Alice, sketch-book in hand, seated upon the sheltered seat she had so often occupied, engaged in taking a last drawing of the old ruin from a different point of view. While bending over her book, absorbed in her task, a hand was laid lightly on her shoulder, and a familiar voice said,

"I thought, indeed I was quite sure, I should find you here. This is a favorite spot, is it not, Alice?"

Turning quickly around she encountered Dr. Monroe's eyes fixed upon her face with an expression of unwonted seriousness in their dark orbs.

"Yes," she replied, "I have dreamed away very many hours in delicious reverie in this seat. It is so retired and solitary that I have formed quite an attachment to it."

"Does it make you sad to leave it?"

"Somewhat so," she answered, with deliberate thoughtfulness; "not exactly sad either, but a little

regretful. It is a strange mingling of feelings. I suppose I am a little sorry that I shall never see this lovely spot after to-day, and yet I am very happy in the thought of going home again."

"There are many pleasant associations connected with yonder venerable pile and this old garden," he soliloquized, "many things which will be recalled in after years with infinite satisfaction, are there not, Alice?"

Alice's eyes fell beneath his keen, scrutinizing gaze, and she answered, while a burning flush suffused her face as she recognized his covert meaning,

"Is it not your experience that there are always more or less pleasant memories connected with almost all the places you have visited, particularly those in which you have spent any considerable time? Let us go down yonder," she continued, hurriedly. "See! they are gathering the vintage, and I must have one more indulgence in grapes before we leave 'La belle France.'

"Come, thou, with me to the vineyards nigh,
And we'll pluck the grapes of the richest dye,"

she caroled lightly, as her companion rose to obey her behest.

They walked leisurely along, almost in silence, until they reached the vineyard. The luscious purple clusters were hanging in rich profusion from the heavily laden vines. Vintagers of both sexes were

busily employed in gathering the ruby wealth, which was destined, by its sale, to enrich its owner.

Pointing to one of the topmost clusters, whose cheeks were glowing beneath the kiss of the soft south breeze, Alice exclaimed,

“What a royal feast yonder beauty would make were it only attainable!”

“Attainable!” replied the doctor, emphatically. “I hope you don’t call that unattainable.”

“I suppose I was judging from my own limited ability,” she answered, humbly. “I have no doubt it might be captured by some one who possesses greater skill, more strength, and a nobler stature than I.”

“Yes,” he answered, laughing, the latter qualification is quite an important one in this case. “If I were as spry at acrobatic feats as I once was before this inconvenient obesity fastened itself upon me, I would show you that yonder magnificent cluster is one of the things by no means unattainable.”

Having made several unsuccessful efforts, he was glad to avail himself of the services of a lad, standing near, whom he bade ascend a ladder and secure the coveted prize. After obtaining an abundant supply of the tempting luxury, he prepared to depart with his fragrant burden.

“Now let us go back to our seat and enjoy our feast,” said Alice, gleefully.

“Are grapes the sole object of your thought and

ambition at the present moment?" he asked, reproachfully.

"Yes," was the smiling reply; "they occupy my entire mind just now, doctor."

"Alice," he asked, abruptly, "for what purpose do you imagine I came here?"

"For what purpose do other travelers come?" she inquired, innocently.

"Heaven knows! What would you say?"

"Some in quest of health, some on business, and some merely for the gratification of their fancy. Now, as your appearance doesn't indicate a lack of earth's greatest and best boon, and your business lies far 'o'er the Atlantic wave,' the inference is, that you acted under the influence of your own 'sweet will,' or, in other words, came because you wanted to."

"We seem to have exchanged characters," he answered, gravely. "You are in a jesting mood—I am not. I am in earnest. It was for your sake and yours only. I could not be satisfied with the reports of others. I wanted to drink in the light of health which they wrote me sparkled in your eye, to see the color they said glowed upon your cheeks, to hear the full, healthy tones, they declared vibrated in your voice. It is true, Alice, I have seen these things with my own eyes; but I have also seen something which has given me infinitely less satisfaction. I have seen that you are not the same Alice who used to sit 'in maiden meditation, fancy free.'

You are my little Alice no longer. There is another name which blends with your thoughts—another voice that is sweeter music to your ears. Nay, do not attempt to interrupt me,” he continued, as she opened her lips to speak. “You cannot deceive me. That young man has stolen your heart, imperceptibly it may be, but unmistakably. He is your devoted admirer; and, child, child, you reciprocate his feelings. O! Alice darling, I could not expect to wear so fair a flower on my old heart, but I confess my selfishness. I cannot bear to see it worn by another.”

Alice was much affected by his earnestness, and her eyes filled with tears as she answered, impressively,

“Dr. Monroe, you are mistaken; Bishop and I have, necessarily, been much together, and formed a sort of attachment, which, I solemnly assure you, is, on my part, nothing more than a friendly, or at most a sisterly, feeling, born of an almost constant association and kindred hopes.”

“‘Constant association!’ ‘kindred hopes!’ Alice, it is just these things which I fear. Pity may be ‘akin to love,’ but, alas! pity is not the only feeling which inspires the noblest passion of the human soul. Congeniality of feeling, similarity of taste and purpose, are dangerous elements when they exist in the bosoms of two persons of opposite sexes when they are brought into close and intimate relationship. It was this I feared, and my fears are realized.”

Dr. Monroe was too noble in mind and heart to

remind Alice of the inferior pedigree of her youthful suitor, or in any way to detract from his merits, and she admired his spirit and pitied his evident unhappiness, while she searched the inner recesses of her heart for words of cheer and comfort. She was too truthful to deny Bishop's love for her, or to imply that she was unconscious of its existence. Looking reproachfully, she asked,

"Have I not always been truthful to you?"

"The very soul of truth and honor," was the reply.

"Very well! Then will you not believe me when I tell you again that you are utterly mistaken?"

"I believe you. It would be an insult to doubt your word; but, Alice, my dear child, take care that you be not deceived."

"I am not deceived," she answered, briefly. "I know my own heart."

"Well," he replied, "I believe you, but I suppose I am no better off, only this selfish old heart keeps whispering, 'Never mind, if she can't be yours, she don't belong to any one else, just yet, at any rate.'"

"You have always been my friend from my earliest childhood," answered Alice, laying her hand affectionately upon his; "a friend whom I have revered and trusted more than I can tell you. But as for any warmer feeling, I assure you, it is an utter foreigner to my breast. I shall not marry, at least for many years. I have laid out a work for myself which, with God's help, I mean to

perform. I am going to see if I cannot benefit my kind. There are hundreds and thousands of women who are cast upon the world with no means of support—women who have been reared in luxury and are unqualified to earn even a scanty maintenance. Ignorant of almost every thing useful; they cannot teach, they cannot sew, there is literally nothing they *can* do, and they become helpless burdens upon those who are often unable, and more often unwilling, to provide for them. I am going to try what can be done for them. I do not know in what way. My ideas are crude, and my plans unformed, but on the main point I am decided, and, having put my hand to the plow, I shall not look back. The care of my mother will be the first and dearest thought of my heart. To minister to her and make her happy will be a pleasant task; but I have not been absolutely idle, as you imagine, even in this seductive place, where every thing conduces to ease and indolence. I have, at odd times, without taxing myself very heavily, completed a book which is now in New York, and which I expect to find in the market on my return. The proceeds of this, aside from such an amount as will be required by the strictest economy, I intend to devote to the object of which I have spoken to you. I have no doubt you think me Quixotic, and perhaps I am. Every thing is in such an immature state, but I hope my plan will develop into a source of actual, tangible

good to very many helpless woman. Come," she said, gently, as the lengthening shadows warned them of the hour, "it must be almost tea-time."

Slowly she arose, and with a sad smile prepared to depart. Gathering up parasol and sketch-book, her companion followed, each casting a regretful look at the venerable relic of departed greatness.

At the tea-table Mr. Horton rallied Bishop upon his abstraction, but the pained look in the young man's face warned him to desist.

The party were gathered in the open air, enjoying their last evening in that delightful climate, when Bishop approached Alice, saying, in a low tone,

"Will you take one more stroll with me before we part?"

Alice hesitated a moment, when he said,

"Remember, it is the last."

Passing to her room in order to get her hat, she encountered Mrs. Dunbar.

"Going out?" she asked, with an arch smile.

"Yes," answered Alice; "Bishop and I are going to the old ruin for the last time."

"Take care, Alice" she said, raising her finger with a warning gesture; "these moonlight promenades are dangerous."

"I am fortified, auntie," she replied, gently; and with a firm step she rejoined Bishop, who was impatiently awaiting her return. With a common, but unexpressed, wish they turned their way toward the

scene of the afternoon's conversation, which was still fresh in Alice's mind. A sadness, partly the effect of circumstances, and partly engendered by the quiet, spiritual beauty of the place, brooded over each.

A broad, full moon shed its silver light over the weird, romantic-looking pile. As constellation after constellation became visible in the illimitable arch above, the whole heavens seemed aglow. Grotesque shadows were cast by the nodding branches which had loosened themselves from the crumbling walls, while in the full flood of silver light "the young leaves were dancing in breezy mirth."

"Shall we ever sit in this way again, think you?" asked Bishop, thoughtfully.

"Not in this place," she replied, trying to speak lightly.

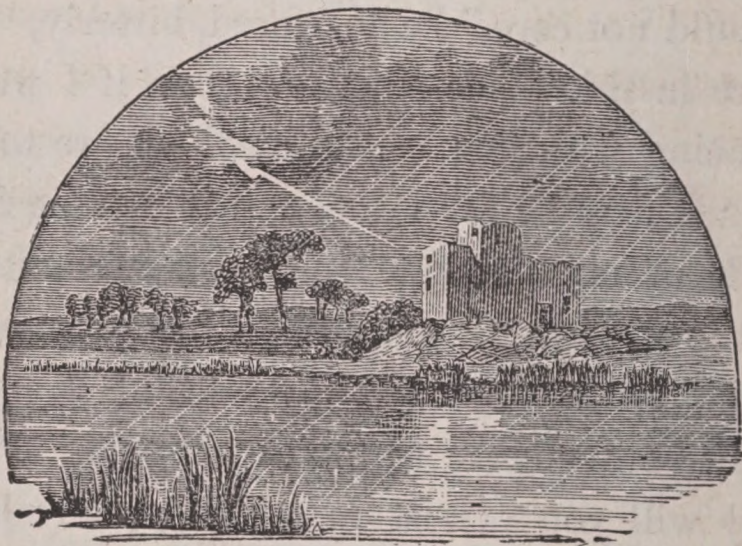
"I should not care," he answered, bitterly, "whether it were in this place or some other, if I were only sure of being with you. But, alas! we are to be separated. 'It may be for years, and it may be forever.' To think of my parting from you without having gained the promise I sought! I would have served like Jacob for his beloved Rachel, but my years of study will be drudgery to me now."

"Why will you persist in making yourself miserable?" she asked, in persuasive tones. "You and I are going to be far too busy people to think of such things, Bishop. We have each a work to do, let us do it with our might, not dreaming away our

time in idle love passages, but remembering that ‘the night cometh when no man can work.’ If you are going to rise to any eminence in your profession, you must banish all these things from your mind, and apply yourself with a will to years of patient study and unremitting effort. Take Longfellow’s noble poem for your watch-word. Keep in mind his stirring words :

‘Act—act in the living present !
Heart within, and God o’erhead.’

I am not preaching to you that which I do not intend to practice myself. Let us each do our best, and when we clasp hands after a separation of two or three years, let us see how much each has accomplished for himself, the world, and God.”





CHAPTER XXIII.

FOLLOWING the line of Broadway as far as Thirty-eighth Street, we overtake a lady, young, and of attractive appearance. The slight form is carried with dainty grace. The head is erect, as though its owner were in the conscious possession of power. The dark eyes emit gleams of intelligence, while the smile upon the finely-curved lips betokens the companionship of pleasant thoughts.

Turning the corner, she passed down half a square and lightly ascended the steps of a pleasant-looking house, evidently the abode of culture and refinement.

"Is my sister at home?" she asked of the trim servant-maid who opened the door.

"Yes, Miss Alice," was the respectful reply. "You will find her up stairs."

Hastily running up the first flight, she entered the open door of the front chamber, exclaiming,

"Here I am, Mabel; come to inflict my presence upon you for the whole long day! Do you imagine you will survive it? How now, Master Charlie," she said, catching up the smiling infant and tossing him, "Are you glad to see Aunt Alice?"

The child cooed his welcome, while his mother said,

"O, Alice dear! I am so glad to see you. Now take off your hat, and let us have a good, long talk."

"Yes," answered Alice, "after I have had my romp with this young gentleman. There, you lump of infantile perfection," she said, playfully tossing him into her sister's lap.

"How happy you look!" exclaimed Mabel, as Alice laid off her hat and gave the dark hair a careless push from the broad white brow.

"Do I?" she asked, joyously. "Well, I am very happy. I believe my glasses are *couleur de rose* this morning, every thing looks so bright. You are always so unselfish in your interest, Mabel dear, that I am going to open my budget, and tell you all that pleases me—"

"Shall I take Master Charlie out now, ma'am?" asked the nurse as she entered, equipped for a walk.

"Yes, Mary, take him out, and give him a good airing," was the smiling reply.

"Now, Alice darling," she continued, as they watched the departure of the tasteful little carriage, "I am not half so unselfish as you think. My interest in your affairs is unbounded—but I am so proud of your great success. And don't you see, dearest, that it comes back upon me with its reflective glory, as the sister of such a brilliant young authoress? Robert says I am a great deal more proud of you than I would be if it were myself."

"Robert is about right," replied Alice, in husky

tones. "You have always been my dear, good, faithful sister, loving me a great deal more than I deserve. But I want to tell you my good news. You recollect that Mrs. Olcott called upon me, more than a year ago, to ask assistance for a lady who had been reduced to the verge of penury by one of those inscrutable providences of which we know something, Mabel, by sad experience. You remember that she proposed opening a fancy store, which I very gladly assisted her to do. She has succeeded beyond her expectations, and now wishes to refund a part of the money which she would accept only as a loan. I called upon her yesterday afternoon and refused to receive the amount which she handed me, but she was so evidently hurt by my rejection of her offer, that I dared not press it further. I wish you could see her, Mabel; she is a lady by birth and education, and I am so thankful to have had it in my power to assist her in this way, and so glad for her that she is able to gratify her honorable independence of feeling, and the sum which she has been enabled to repay shall be kept, as a reserved fund, to be appropriated to the relief of another similar case."

Alice paused a moment, when Mabel replied,

"Alice dearest, you are doing a noble work. I do not wonder you are happy. Surely the law of compensation is nicely carried out, and the liberal soul is made fat."

"Ah! but I have not told you all my sources of

pleasure yet, Mabel. This Mrs. Denver has a son who is of sufficient age to enter upon some line of business. I have been to see Dr. Parker this morning to induce him to use his influence to obtain a position for him. He assures me that he will exert himself to the utmost; and you know what that means. Item number two: I had a note from my publisher this morning, saying that 'Bonnie Belle' will be out in about two weeks, so that my hopes of doing that which my heart prompts brighten visibly."

"Your heart prompts you to do more than you are able, I fear. Be careful; do not lay too heavy a burden upon those slender shoulders."

"Never fear," she answered, gayly. "O, Mabel! do you know I was very much surprised last evening by a call from an old friend. Whom do you suppose I mean? Search all the crannies of your memory to bring to light the one in question."

"Your friends are so numerous that it would be a hopeless task to single out one individual," replied Mabel, smiling.

"Perhaps it would be imposing too much upon you. Well, I will hasten to relieve your curiosity. I was sitting in my own room in a particularly quiet, thoughtful mood, when James entered and handed me a bit of pasteboard, on which was inscribed 'A. BISHOP HORTON.'"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mabel. "That must have

been a surprise. He has been here before, though, since his return from abroad, hasn't he?"

"O yes! twice before. You know he was admitted to the bar only three months ago—almost immediately after his return, and he has already had several cases, which, I think, is doing pretty well."

"Yes, I should say so, too. I have no doubt he will succeed admirably. You know he has the advantage of Mr. Horton's position and influence, a prestige as the *protégé* of a wealthy and popular man. Alice," she continued, as she bent her laughing eyes upon her sister's face, "do you know that I wove quite a romance about you and that young man? I was afraid you might develop *le grande passion* between you."

"Afraid, Mabel?"

"Yes, afraid," she answered, decidedly. "I have glowing visions for my darling Alice."

"Ah, indeed? And does he not meet your approbation, most captious critic?"

"Hardly. Think of what he was ten years ago."

"Well, what of that? Think of what he may be ten years hence."

"O, but I have an aspiring ambition for my talented sister. He who wears her upon his heart must be unexceptionable in every respect."

"A myth, Mabel; a figment of your own imagination."

"No, a genuine flesh-and-blood being. You have

spirituality enough for both ; but he must be of good birth, and occupy an honorable position."

"Perhaps a senator would suit you, or, may be, the President of the United States. O you ridiculous Mabel ! And how do you know but Bishop may be senator or governor ! Would that suit you to be the sister of a governor's lady ? Or he may even reach the White House. In this land of equal rights his chance may be as good as that of any other."

"Mrs. Chandler," said the cook, putting her head in at the door, "there's a poor woman down stairs, ma'am, as acts shtrange-like. I think its sick she be's. Will yez cum down and see her, ma'am ?"

"Yes, Barbara ; I will come immediately."

Descending to the kitchen, Mrs. Chandler found a woman whom, at first sight, she thought to be intoxicated, but a closer observation convinced her that the poor creature was the victim of disease and want. The whole face wore a wan, gaunt appearance, the sunken eyes had a dull, lack-luster look, while an almost ashy paleness was settling around the mouth, whose expression was that of utter hopelessness.

"Are you ill ?" asked Mrs. Chandler, gently.

"Ill !" she exclaimed, in hollow, almost sepulchral tones. "My God ! I am starving, famishing for food. I have tasted nothing for three days."

"Poor woman !" was the compassionate answer. "You shall have all that you require to make you comfortable, and then I will listen to as much of

your story as you feel disposed to relate. Barbara," she continued, "prepare some hot coffee immediately, and something warm and nice to eat."

"Alice," she called, from the foot of the stairs, "come down here, please."

The woman gave a perceptible start as that name fell upon her ear, and cast furtive glances toward the door as the rustling of garments was heard approaching.

Alice entered, and after allowing her time to speak a few kind words to the woman, Mrs. Chandler said,

"After you have finished your meal, if you will come into the dining-room, we will see what can be done for you."

"Alice," she exclaimed, after the twain had entered the adjoining room and closed the door, "did you see that woman's eyes follow you? She watched your slightest movement."

"Yes," was the reply, and it seems to me there is something familiar in her countenance, yet I cannot recall where I ever met her. Probably she is very much changed by hardship, so that recognition would be very difficult, or she may resemble some person whom I have seen and forgotten."

"No. I am positive she knows you. Whom—"

The last sentence was interrupted as the door opened and the object of their conjectures entered, marshaled by Barbara, whose huge, brawny propor-

tions presented a striking contrast to the emaciated figure which followed. Around the limp form hung, in loose, untidy folds, the drapery, which had originally been of expensive material, but was now faded and worn. The feet were incased in shoes which had evidently seen better days, while the head was crowned by a hat corresponding in color and material to the dress, showing that its selection had been made with some regard to taste.

"Take this seat," said Alice, kindly, as she rose from the most comfortable chair in the room; "you look as though you needed a soft seat and kind treatment. After you have rested awhile, perhaps, you will tell us in what way we can assist you. I assure you, both my sister and myself will do all that lies in our power."

"I believe you," was the reply, given in a weary, dejected tone. "You are very kind. I wonder if you would believe me if I should tell you that five years ago I was at home in a house as elegant in all its appointments as your own not a half-dozen squares from this very spot. I was reared in the midst of luxury, and led to expect it all my life. I was taught to look with contempt upon those whose surroundings were less sumptuous than my own. Well, five years ago my father failed utterly, entirely. Just as I was about to enter society—to flutter there like a gaudy butterfly, and finally make a brilliant marriage—the edifice that I had been so long rearing tottered, and,

with a crash, fell to the ground. Then it was that I began to regret the faults of my early education."

Alice watched her closely, and her mind traveled back to locate, if possible, this person, who, she was morally certain, had somewhere crossed her path. Instantly a flash of recognition passed over her face, when the stranger put out her hand, saying,

"Do you not know me, Miss Hamilton? I am—"

"Lou Wentworth!" exclaimed Alice, seizing her hand. "O how sorry I am to see you in such a condition! But tell me more, Lou. Tell me all. Remember you are talking to friends now."

"Friends, Alice? Is it possible you can be my friend? Ah, Alice, my cup of misery is full, and I am bitterly but justly punished for my treatment of you. It cannot be that you will treat me kindly. Now is your time to be revenged. I am in your power."

"Revenged! Ah, Lou, have you forgotten who has said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay?' Besides, I have nothing for which to be revenged. It was a childish error which, I feel sure, your natural good sense would have taught you to overcome."

"Yes," she answered, piteously, "I was educated to it, Alice. I was taught to think luxury my vital breath, and that those who could not enjoy it were immeasurably inferior to myself, and to be treated accordingly. O the wretched training that ignorant,

purse-proud parents give their children ! It ought to be scouted as a most reprehensible source of heart-blackening, soul-destroying tendencies."

"Yes," answered Alice, "it is a prolific cause of untold harm, not only to the present generation, but to those also which are to follow. But tell me of your father and mother."

"Yes, I will tell you the remainder of my sad story, and you will then see that I am drinking the dregs of the bitterest cup that often falls to a human lot. My mother had not sufficient strength of mind to bear her reverses and her terrible disappointment at my changed future. She lost all heart and interest, and became peevish and irritable, and at length sunk into the grave, broken-hearted. But, Alice, when I think of my father, then it is that my heart seems bursting. He was kind and good, O, so good to me ; but the old story was true in his case. He tasted the fiery cup, and rum was his murderer. Of course, after his failure, we were obliged to leave our elegant home, and go down, down, from one poor tenement house to another still poorer, until finally we could not pay for lodgings in even the poorest. I tried to get sewing, but I could not earn sufficient to supply our wants, for I am not an expert needle-woman, never having been taught to sew. Then, I went out washing, but these hands were not inured to hard work, and I soon rubbed the skin off, so that I was obliged to have them bound up for days. My

father would frequently be gone all night—sometimes two or three nights—and then came home in a drunken frenzy, and strike me because I had nothing for him to eat. O, Alice, my father, who used to pet me and treat me so tenderly! Three months ago he died, and I have supported myself since as best I could. Many a day have I passed without a morsel of food, and this morning, famishing and desperate, I came to your door.”

Here she burst into a passion of tears which so exhausted her that she sunk nearly fainting. Mabel rose quietly and left the room, presently returning with a restorative, which the poor sufferer drank with feverish eagerness. After a time she rallied, and soon gathering her faded garments about her, she said,

“Now you have heard my wretched tale of woe; you have fed and comforted me, and I will relieve you of my miserable presence.”

“Indeed, you will do no such thing,” replied Alice, warmly. “Remember you told me you were in my power. Now I am going to have my own way.”

“Come up stairs,” said Mabel, gently, “and after luncheon I will go and bring Dr. Monroe to see you. Together we will nurse you up in a few days, so that you will scarcely recognize yourself.”

“You are more than kind,” she answered, feebly. “I cannot understand it, any more than I can think of trespassing upon you so much.”

“Not a word,” said Alice, playfully, laying her

hand over her mouth. Do you feel equal to mounting two flights of stairs, or shall—”

What Alice proposed to do in the event of Lou's strength proving inadequate to the ascent was never revealed, for the latter interrupted her, by saying, eagerly,

“O, yes! Kind words are a very powerful tonic, Alice.”

The entrance of the nurse with Master Charlie at this time diverted the stream of conversation until after luncheon.

“Mabel, you had better postpone your visit to see Dr. Monroe. I have a plan in my head which I will unfold on my return. Now, Lou, I am going to leave you awhile,” said Alice. “Wait patiently for me, and see if I cannot bring a smile to your lip and a light to your eye.”

Hastening home, she imparted to her mother and Mrs. Dunbar the startling event of the morning, asking permission to bring Lou there, and pledging herself to be responsible for any additional expense and care which might be incurred by the arrangement.

“Thank you, auntie, dear,” she said. “You are so kind to gratify all my whims.”

“Whims, Alice! Who could refuse you any thing? I am only afraid that you are shouldering a great responsibility.”

“O no, auntie! The poor of this world are left

us as a legacy, and, you know, we always look out for that."

Having gained her point, she prepared a full street suit which, after deftly and skillfully packing it in a satchel, she easily induced the waiter to carry to Mabel's house, for Lou must be suitably arrayed, and the servants must not see her in her present forlorn condition, lest some future act of disrespect might wound her feelings.

"Now," she said, gleefully, as she opened the satchel, and shook out the folds of a new dress in which she had not yet appeared; "you and I are not so dissimilar in form, Lou, but that we can easily wear each other's dresses at an emergency. Come, doff these garments which Mabel's ingenuity will enable her to dispose of, and don this, which, I have no doubt, will be exceedingly becoming."

The exchange was soon made, and Alice conducted the transformed girl to her own luxurious home. Both Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Dunbar gave her a most cordial greeting, and great care was taken that no taint of coolness or suspicion should recall to mind the now bitterly regretted past.

"Your wardrobe shall be attended to immediately, dear," said Alice, after having conducted her to a pleasant and tasteful chamber, adjoining the one occupied by her mother and herself. "Now, I am going to see Dr. Monroe, and will leave you to rest until I bring him to see you."

"No, Alice, I protest against your exerting yourself any more to-day. I do not need the professional services of your friend. I think you have administered the true tonic."

"Then, you are my patient, and, as your physician, I prescribe rest and quiet for you;" and, tossing a kiss from the tips of her gloved fingers, she disappeared.

Doctor Monroe gave it as his opinion that, as there was no organic disease about Lou, rest and good generous food would restore her to perfect health, a prediction which in a few days gave promise of a speedy verification.

"Alice," she said, one morning, as the two were seated together in easy conversation, "I have been thinking what I can do to render myself less burdensome to you. You know my education has been exceedingly superficial; I was taught a smattering of this, that, and the other fashionable accomplishment; but I am not mistress of any one, and so, of course, am not competent to instruct others, while, so far as any thing useful is concerned, I am in utter ignorance."

"Now, Lou," was the smiling reply, "if you love me, do not talk of being a burden. Believe it or not, as you please, these trials have been a blessing to you. They have developed your character and brought to view traits which I have learned to love, so that what was at first done from a sense of Christian duty is now done from a feeling of true affection. Say no

more about it, please, but continue to be that which you now are, my gentle, sympathizing friend. Do you know, Lou, you have been of great service to me in my work? You have unconsciously furnished me many capital ideas, and to pay you for them I am going to procure some light needle-work which you can do at your leisure, and mamma, who knows almost every thing, will hold herself in readiness to assist when ever you may require her aid."

"Alice," she exclaimed, with a quivering lip, "you are the noblest woman I ever saw. If this is the way you requite your injuries, God help and forgive me, who so sadly wounded your tender heart. You are 'heaping coals of fire on my head.'"

"Lou, let us make a solemn compact. This matter is never to be mentioned between us again. Let it lie deeply buried beneath the ashes of a dead past, never to rise again. I should be a most unworthy disciple of Him whose religion is the law of love and kindness, did I remember and resent a wrong done me in my childish days."

"Well, Alice," interrupted Mabel, entering the room, "so you are going to Boston to-morrow! A sudden move, is it not?"

"Yes, rather; but Fan's marriage is fixed for Thursday, and as I am to be first brides-maid, it is necessary for me to be on hand in time."

"So she is going to marry the Reverend James, after all, is she?"

"Yes," replied Alice, in a musing tone. "How very strange it all seems. To think that Maud should have married a farmer, and settle down there; but stranger still that quiet, refined Nellie could have fancied that boisterous, rollicking Tom Seaton; and, strangest of all, that madcap Fan could consent to become the wife of a grave, staid clergyman, like the Reverend James Horton."

"Don't you think Uncle Rufus has some hand in making the match?" asked Mabel, archly.

"Yes, this nephew is the apple of his eye, while Fan is his favorite among all the girls. He likes a woman with a sharp tongue, one who can return his sallies with interest; and Fan's words sometimes flash like a bright sword whipped from its scabbard."

"Well," replied Mabel, smiling, "Fan is to go to the altar with a clergyman, and you will probably follow with *A. Bishop*."

It will be remembered that Lou and Bishop were cousins; but the former, in her five years of bereavement and sorrow, had heard but little of the changed prospects of the boy whom she had so much despised, and who had repaid her with a bitter hatred. Alice had been, this very morning, giving her a detailed account of his adoption and subsequent change of name. Now Mabel's playful remark gave her food for a new idea, and furnished the materials for a glowing romance, of which she was not slow to make the best possible use.

We do not say that Mabel's words bear any relationship to sober truth, or that they will be realized in the future. We simply accord to Alice that which every woman claims as her right—the privilege of changing her mind. She is still busy at her work, still interested, still weaving many a bright tissue of fancy. A thought is a brain-child, and her brain has, many times, brought forth such thoughts as have been meat to the hungry and drink to the thirsty soul. She is not altogether an ideal character. She is the type of very many noble, Christian women, who are to be found all over the land; women who are deeply imbued with the spirit of Christ, and are working for the Master and for humanity. She has found, not the philosopher's stone, not an inexhaustible mine of wealth, but the true spiritual alembic into which she pours the cares and sorrows of life, and they become transmuted into the pure gold of heavenly joy. Her "life is hid with Christ in God," and she is living in daily anticipation of her entrance into the unsullied radiance of the LIGHT AHEAD.

THE END.

PUBLICATIONS OF PHILLIPS & HUNT,

805 Broadway, New York.

| | | |
|--|--|--------|
| Arctic Heroes. Facts and Incidents of Arctic Explorations. From the Earliest Voyages to the Discoveries of Sir John Franklin, embracing Sketches of Commercial and Religious Results. By Rev. Z. A. Mudge. Illustrated. 16mo..... | | \$1 00 |
| North Pole Voyages. Embracing Sketches of the Important Facts and Incidents in the latest American Efforts to Reach the North Pole, from the Second Grinnell Expedition to the Polaris. By Rev. Z. A. Mudge. 16mo..... | | 1 00 |
| Six Years in India ; or, Sketches of India and its People, as seen by a Lady Missionary, given in a Series of Letters to her Mother. By Mrs. E. J. Humphrey. Eight Illustrations. 12mo..... | | 1 00 |
| Heroine of the White Nile ; or, What a Woman Did and Dared. A Sketch of the Remarkable Travels and Experience of Miss Alexina Tinnè. By Prof. William Wells. Illustrated. 12mo..... | | 85 |
| Spiritualism ; With the Testimony of God and Man against it. By Rev. W. M'Donald. 12mo..... | | 1 00 |
| Earth, and its Wonders. By Charles Adams, D.D. Illustrated. 16mo..... | | 1 00 |
| General and Christian Elements of Theology. By L. T. Townsend, D.D. Flexible. 12mo..... | | 45 |
| Systematic Beneficence ; Comprising The Great Reform ; The Great Question ; and Property Consecrated. 16mo... | | 85 |
| Livingstone in Africa. By Rev. S. A. W. Jewett. Illustrated. 16mo..... | | 1 00 |
| Glimpses of our Lake Region in 1863, and other Papers. By Mrs. H. C. Gardner. 16mo..... | | 1 25 |
| Young Folks' History of Greece. By Charlotte M. Yonge. Illustrated. 16mo..... | | 1 25 |
| Manners of the Ancient Israelites. By Claude Fleury. Enlarged by Adam Clarke, LL.D., F. S. A. 18mo..... | | 55 |
| Early History of the North-west. By S. P. Hildreth, M.D. Large 16mo | | 85 |
| The Freedom of the Will. By D. D. Whedon, D.D. 12mo. | | 1 50 |
| Word of God Opened. By Rev. B. K. Pierce. 16mo..... | | 1 00 |
| Studies in Theism. By Borden P. Bowne. 12mo..... | | 1 50 |
| Life Among the Choctaw Indians. By H. C. Benson. 12mo. | | 1 50 |

PUBLICATIONS OF PHILLIPS & HUNT,

805 BROADWAY. N. Y.

AYESHA. A Tale of the Times of Mohammed. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

FLAVIA ; or, Loyal to the End. A Tale of the Church in the Second Century. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

GLAUCIA. A Story of Athens in the First Century. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

LEOFWINE, THE SAXON. A Story of Hopes and Struggles. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

ELFREDA. A Sequel to Leofwine. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

QUADRATUS. A Tale of the World in the Church. By Emma Leslie. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

SUNSHINE OF BLACKPOOL. By Emma Leslie. Price, 85c.

HOPE RAYMOND ; or, What is Truth. By Mrs. E. J. Richmond. Illustrated. Large 16mo. Price, 85 cents.

THE TWO PATHS. By Mrs. E. J. Richmond. Price, 85c.

MEHETABEL. A Story of the Revolution, By Mrs. H. C. Gardner. Illustrated. Large 16mo. Price, \$1.

MORAG ; a Story of Highland Life. 12mo. Price, \$1.

MOTHER, HOME, AND HEAVEN. A Collection of Poems. Edited by Mrs. J. P. Newman. Square 18mo. Gilt edge. Price, \$1 25.

DEWDROPS AND SUNSHINE. A Collection of Poems about Little Children. Edited by Mrs. J. P. Newman. Square 18mo. Gilt edge. Price, \$1 25.

JACQUELINE. A Story of the Reformation in Holland. By Mrs. Hardy. Four Illustrations. 16mo. Price, 80 cents.

LUCIEN GUGLIERI. By Mary B. Lee. 16mo. Price, 50 cents.

LILIAN. A Story of the Days of Martyrdom in England Three Hundred Years Ago. 16mo. Price, 75 cents.

RENATA OF ESTE. From the German of Rev. Carl Strack. By Catherine E. Hurst. 12mo. Price, \$1.

THE LITTLE TROWEL. By Edith Waddy. Illustrated. Large 16mo. Price, 75 cents.

JOHN RICHMAND ; or, a Sister's Love. By T. Taylor. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, 85 cents.

FRAULEIN MINA ; or, Life in an American German Family. By Miss Mary H. Norris. 12mo. Price, \$1.

PUBLICATIONS OF PHILLIPS & HUNT,

805 BROADWAY, N. Y.

STAR OF OUR LORD; or, Christ Jesus, King of all Worlds, both of Time or Space. With Thoughts on Inspiration, and the Astronomic Doubt as to Christianity. By Francis W. Upham, LL.D. 12mo. Price, \$1 50.

PRINCIPLES OF A SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY. An Essay toward Solving some of the More Difficult Questions in Metaphysics and Religion. By A. Bierlower, A.M. 12mo. Price, \$1.

MISSION OF THE SPIRIT; or, The Office and Work of the Comforter in Human Redemption. By Rev. L. R. Dunn. 12mo. Price, \$1.

OBJECT OF LIFE. Illustrating the Insufficiency of the World, and the Sufficiency of Christ. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1.

BUTLER'S ANALOGY OF RELIGION. With a Life of the Author. Edited by Rev. Joseph Cummings, D.D., LL.D., President of Wesleyan University. 12mo. Price, \$1 50.

PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER. Being an Examination of the First Principles of his System. By B. P. Bowne, A.B. 12mo. Price, \$1.

LOVE ENTHRONED; or, Essays on Evangelical Perfection. By Daniel Steele, D.D. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

METHODISM AND ITS METHODS. By Rev. J. T. Crane, D.D. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

THE WISE MEN: Who they Were, and How they Came to Jerusalem. By Francis W. Upham, LL.D. 12mo. Price, \$1.

MISREAD PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE. By J. Baldwin Brown. 12mo. Second Series, price, 85 cents.

MYSTERY OF SUFFERING, and other Discourses. By E. De Pressensé, D.D. 12mo. Price, \$1.

NEW LIFE DAWNING, and other Discourses of the late B. N. Nadal, D.D. 12mo. Price, \$1 50.

PILLARS OF TRUTH. A Series of Sermons on the Decalogue. By Rev. E. O. Haven, D.D. 12mo. Price, \$1.

THE GREAT CONFLICT. Christ and Antichrist. The Church and the Apostasy. By Rev. H. Loomis. 12mo. 85 cents.

FROM ATHEISM TO CHRISTIANITY. By Rev. Geo. P. Porter. 16mo. Price, 50 cents.

POSITIVE THEOLOGY. By Rev. W. Lowry. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

PROBLEM OF EVIL. Translated from the French of M. Ernest Naville, by Professor John P. Lacroix. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.

PUBLICATIONS OF PHILLIPS & HUNT,

805 BROADWAY, N. Y.

-
- Discontent, and other Stories.** By Mrs. H. C. Gardner. 12mo. Price, \$1.
- Little Foxes.** By the Author of "How Marjorie Watched." Illustrated. Large 16mo. Price, 75 cents.
- Helena's Cloud with the Silver Lining.** By the Author of "How Marjorie Watched," etc. Price, 75 cents.
- Little Princess, and other Stories, Chiefly about Christmas.** By "Aunt Hattie." 18mo. Price, 55 cents.
- Peter the Apprentice.** An Historical Tale of the Reformation in England. 16mo. Price, 75 cents.
- Romance Without Fiction ; or, Sketches from the Portfolio of an Old Missionary.** By Rev. Henry Bleby. 12mo. Price, \$1 50.
- Dora Hamilton ; or, Sunshine and Shadow.** 16mo. Price, 75 cts.
- Dying Saviour and the Gipsy Girl.** 18mo. Price, 45 cents.
- Bessie and Her Spanish Friends.** By the Author of "Faithful, but not Famous," etc. 16mo. Price, 75 cents.
- Ben and Bentie Series.** School Life of Ben and Bentie. Price, 90 cents. Camp Tabor. Price, 75 cents.
- True Stories of the American Fathers.** For the Girls and Boys all over the Land. By Miss Rebecca M'Conkey. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.
- Martyrs of the Catacombs.** 16mo. Price, 75 cents.
- Anna Lavater.** A Picture of Swiss Pastoral Life in the Last Century. By Rev. W. Ziethe. 12mo. Price, 85 cents.
- A Visit to Aunt Agnes.** Illustrated. Tinted. Square 12mo. Price, 85 cents.
- Suzanna De L'Orme.** A Story of Huguenot Times. 12mo. Price, \$1.
- Talks with Girls.** By Augusta Larned. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.
- Story of a Pocket Bible.** Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1.
- True Stories of Real Pets ; or, Friends in Fur and Feathers.** Illustrated. Square 16mo. Price, \$1.
- Rosedale.** A Story of Self-Denial. By Mrs. H. C. Gardner. 12mo. Price, \$1 50.
- Royal Road to Fortune.** By Emily H. Miller. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1 25.
- Simple Stories with Odd Pictures ; or, Evening Amusements for the Little Ones.** With Twenty Illustrations. By Paul Konewka. 16mo. Price, 65 cents.
- Through the Dark to the Day.** A Story. By Mrs. Jennie F. Willing. 16mo. Price, \$1.
- Through Trials to Triumph.** A Story of Boy's School-life. By Miss H. A. Putnam. Illustrated. 12mo. Price, \$1.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00014794074

